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FROM MAN TO MAN  
OR *PERHAPS ONLY* . . . .

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BENN'S ESSEX LIBRARY

*Edited by Edward G. Hawke, M.A.*

OLIVE SCHREINER

FROM MAN TO MAN

OR *PERHAPS ONLY* . . . .

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
S. C. CRONWRIGHT-SCHREINER

*"Perhaps only God knew what  
the lights and shadows were."*

*The Child's Day, p. 67.*

VOLUME I

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DEDICATED  
TO  
MY SISTER LITTLE ELLIE

WHO DIED, AGED EIGHTEEN MONTHS, WHEN  
I WAS NINE YEARS OLD

"Nor knowest thou what argument  
Thy life to thy neighbour's creed hath lent"

ALSO  
TO  
MY ONLY DAUGHTER

BORN ON THE 30TH OF APRIL, AND DIED ON  
THE 1ST OF MAY [1895]





## INTRODUCTION

ON the first day of May 1873 Olive Schreiner, then just eighteen, was living in tents at New Rush, the two-year-old Diamond Diggings now known as Kimberley. On that day she entered in her journal that she had written out the first chapter of *Other Men's Sins*, a name that does not appear again; but, when she was governess at the farm Ratel Hoek, she entered in her journal on the 3rd of August 1876 that she had made up her mind "to write *A Small Bit of Mimosa* and *Wrecked* in one"; on the 21st of the same month that she had "Got some idea of *Saints and Sinners*"; and, on the 10th of September, "*Saints and Sinners* is growing clearer." I am inclined to think that, when she decided to blend *A Small Bit of Mimosa* and *Wrecked* (both then mentioned for the first time), she incorporated *Other Men's Sins* into the same plan. At any rate, we now have this novel fairly started; for *Saints and Sinners* was "the original germ," as she styled it, of *From Man to Man*. Not only did she tell Havelock Ellis this in 1884, but it is abundantly clear otherwise. For instance, in September 1883 she enters in her London journal that she is "At the Jew and 'Rain in London,'" which is now Chapter XI of this novel; and she adds: "Thought of a name, *From Man to Man*." This title is taken from a sentence of John (later Lord) Morley's, which runs as follows, except that I have forgotten the adjective: "*From man to man nothing matters but . . . charity*." The missing word connotes "boundless," "all-embracing," or some such large and generous attitude of mind.

Olive sailed to England for the first time early in March 1881, taking with her *Saints and Sinners* (as far as it was completed), in addition to *The Story of an African Farm*. While governessing at Ratel Hoek and Lelie

The last line, so typed, stands wholly excised by Olive with pen and ink. The couplet under the dedication to little Ellie, as it now appears in this book, indicates the astounding effect Olive claims the infant's brief life and early death had upon her own life.

Except that the title (*The Camel Thorn*) is crossed out and *Perhaps Only* is written above it in largish letters, the "prelim." page of the Woodstock typing is as follows :—

### THE CAMEL THORN

Prelude

The Child's Day

The Book

The Woman's Day

### Part 1

(List of six chapters as they now appear.)

The original plan, or one of the early plans, of the novel was, as I understand it, that *The Child's Day* should be Part 1, *The Woman's Day* Part 2, and *Rebekah* Part 3. I give a copy of an old page, just as I found it in Olive's handwriting :—

Chapter 8. Bertie wants Dorcas to hold her hand.

Chapter 9. Showing how Veronica took hens to the old farm.

Chapter 10. Bertie ties ribbons round the kittens' necks.

Chapter 11. Bertie seeks for the country and cannot find [it].

Chapter 12. "Sally is my Sweetheart  
Sally is my darling."

End of Part 2.

Rebekah.

Chapter 1. Great White Angels.

Chapter 2. Rebekah's Books are Dead.

Chapter 3. The Waterfall.

- Chapter 4. Muizenberg.
- Chapter 5. Sartje.
- Chapter 6. Koonap Heights.
- Chapter 7. The Old Farm.
- Chapter 8. Baby-Bertie.
- Chapter 9. A Bit of Mimosa.
- Chapter 10. How the Wax Flowers Smell.

I now give a list of the chapters of what the whole novel was at one time meant to be, just as I found it :—

*Perhaps Only.*

Prelude : The Child's Day.  
The Book : The Woman's Day.

*Part one of the Woman's Day.*

- Chapter 1. Showing what Baby-Bertie thought of her new tutor and how Rebekah got married.
- Chapter 2. A Wild-Flower Garden in the Bush.
- Chapter 3. The Dam Wall.
- Chapter 4. Showing how Baby-Bertie heard the Cicadas cry.
- Chapter 5. John-Ferdinand shows Veronica his new House.
- Chapter 6. How Baby-Bertie went a-dancing.
- Chapter 7. You cannot capture the Ideal by a Coup d'Etat.

*Part two of the Woman's Day.*

- Chapter 1. Fireflies in the Dark.
- Chapter 2. The Little Black Curl.
- Chapter 3. The Rocks again.
- Chapter 4. Koonap Heights.
- Chapter 5. The Glittering of the Sand.
- Chapter 6. Veronica.
- Chapter 7. The Lure Light.
- Chapter 8. A Bit of Mimosa.
- Chapter 9. The Kopje.

*The End.*

The thirteen chapters, as presented in this book, are all in the order in which Olive meant them to be. Chapter 14, "The Pine Woods," was begun; but as there are less than a thousand words, as they are of no importance to the narrative, are unrevised, and lead

nowhere, I do not think it necessary to give them. After the opening lines, Rebekah and Drummond begin a conversation, which, as far as it goes, has no significance, except possibly for its last few lines:—

“‘Have you ever hated anyone?’ he asked.

“She sat upright: ‘No, not if hatred means the wish to injure. I have loathed people; I have tried to forget some people.’”

There the manuscript ends. There is not another word of the novel or of anything in connection with it. It is as though nothing more had ever been written. It was a custom with her to retain not only her first rapid drafts, but also any manuscript she had gone over and revised. For instance, there were three drafts of *The Buddhist Priest's Wife*, each progressively shorter than the previous one and none of them quite complete; to get the final draft I had to sort 'out the last two drafts in several ways—by handwriting, by age of the paper, and so on—then get the (often wrongly-numbered) sheets into consecutive order respectively, then compare and adjust them. It was much the same with *On the Banks of a Full River*, and with several other of her writings. And so it was with this uncompleted novel; there were a considerable number of drafts of parts; there were fragments, revisions, etc.; but none of these had any relation to the book after the thirteenth chapter, except the few words, already referred to, of the fourteenth. I feel certain that she had “finished” the novel in her mind; I think she had not only thus “finished” the plan of it, but had done so in considerable detail in parts; nothing, however, short of clear proof, will convince me that she wrote down any more after the few words I possess of the fourteenth chapter. I am unable to think she destroyed any of the manuscript of the fourteenth chapter or of any later chapters. After all her assertions, verbal and written, it may seem difficult to believe that her actual writing ceased with the beginning of Chapter 14; and yet that seems to me by far the most likely explanation. (Readers are re-

ferred, for comparison, to the strange story, related in the *Life*, of the "Big Sex Book.") Considering that she kept so much of the rejected, revised and incomplete manuscripts of other books while still working on them, that she actually did the same with this specially loved and valued novel, knowing well also the unreliability of her statements about her work, I am simply unable to believe she destroyed the balance of the manuscript of *From Man to Man*. I do not believe a balance existed. Well, there is the fact, which, extraordinary as it is, yet cannot seem so extraordinary to me as it may to other people. I have been carefully through all her papers; the manuscript of the novel, in whatever confusion, was in one bundle (as was, I think, each of her other sets of manuscripts); and there is not a single scrap of paper after the few opening lines of the fourteenth chapter. It is my considered opinion that she wrote no further than where the manuscript now ends, but that later, at various times and irregular intervals (sometimes intervals of years), she went back to the beginning and to other early parts and set to work on revision. If she had quite abandoned all hope of further work on this beloved book, if she had decided on its destruction and had had sufficient strength to carry out such decision (which I doubt), she would, in my opinion, have destroyed the whole novel except "The Prelude"; she would not have destroyed merely a portion of the unrevised manuscript and left the revised and unrevised remainder. But I do not believe she ever abandoned all hope of still doing some work on the novel, and I do not believe she had it in her heart to destroy this greatly loved offspring of her mature mind any more than it could be in her heart to destroy a child of her physical body.

At the end of Chapter 13, I give a brief account of what she told me as to the ending of the book. It is remarkable and fortunate that the novel does not stop until the tale is told almost to completion, and that the

short account I am able to add will largely satisfy a legitimate desire of those whose interest will lie mainly in the incidents of the narrative; though, to all who love her work and recognise her power, there must ever remain the deep regret that she was unable to wind up the tale herself.

As to the name of the book, I have decided after much thought not to use the title I prefer (and which indeed I wish the book could be known by), but to adopt the one already familiar from its frequent use in the *Life and Letters*—the only title I ever heard Olive use. It seems to me that some confusion would result from the exclusive use of *Perhaps Only*; I do not feel at all sure that she would have used it; I am inclined to think she would have retained the title *From Man to Man*. As far as I know, the titles *Camel Thorn* and *Perhaps Only* were never mentioned to any person. Yet, though I believe I have decided rightly, I deeply regret that *Perhaps Only*—(so she wrote it) cannot be used except as an alternative title. As apparently her last choice, one might well expect it to be the most suitable, expressing with rare art, by the use of those two words taken from the wondering and deep-piercing mind of the child, a kind of stunned reluctance to judge the meaning (if there be a meaning) and the incomprehensibility of the “ethic” (if there be an ethic) in the awful and mysterious living cosmos.

For purposes of this *Introduction* I went carefully through both the *Life* and the *Letters* and copied out practically every reference to the novel contained therein. When all the extracts were before me in chronological order, I decided to leave them to tell their own tale. And so there follow, as a kind of supplement to this *Introduction* and without comment, nearly all such references, made by herself and in her own words.

In dealing with the unrevised original text of the novel all I could do legitimately was, as far as possible, to give it to the world in the form in which Olive

left it. I have striven to present it exactly as she might have presented it, if she herself, without further re-writing, had reduced to its final word-form the unrevised manuscript that came into my hands.

Olive loved this book more than anything else she ever wrote, and, of the book, she loved "The Prelude" best. I have therefore printed "The Prelude" (*The Child's Day*) just as it stands in the Woodstock typing of 1911, and as revised by herself at the time.

It may interest readers to know that many references to "the old farm" are applicable to Klein Ganna Hoek, the farm where she was governess in 1875 and 1876, and where she wrote nearly all of *Undine* and much of *The Story of an African Farm*. But some other farm or farms, which I cannot identify, though I suspect Ratel Hoek for one and possibly Lelie Kloof, must also have been in her mind. "The Child's Day" is certainly almost wholly autobiographical: to take one small incident—she herself built the little mouse-house on the bare rock at Witteberg and waited for the mouse and then fashioned her hand to imitate the mouse entering into it.

S. C. CRONWRIGHT-SCHREINER.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA,  
March, 1926.





## A NOTE ON THE GENESIS OF THE BOOK

LIFE, p. 92. April 7, 1873. (Diary, Kimberley.)  
"Thought out and began to write *Other Men's Sins*."

LIFE, p. 92. May 1, 1873. (Diary, Kimberley.) "I have, since I last wrote, written out the first half of the first chapter of *Other Men's Sins*."

LIFE, p. 126. August 3, 1876. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) Made up her mind "to write *A Small Bit of Mimosa* and *Wrecked* in one. I think it will be good."

LIFE, p. 127. August 21, 1876. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) "I have got some idea of *Saints and Sinners*, and this morning came the thought of—A strong quiet married love; the characters strongly drawn. It will be my next work."

LIFE, p. 127. September 10, 1876. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) "*Saints and Sinners* is growing clearer."

LIFE, p. 128. October 1, 1876. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) "Finished writing but not writing out [that is, copying out] the first chapter of *Saints and Sinners*."

LIFE, p. 130. May 5, 1877. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) "I am writing to-day the scene on the beach."

LIFE, p. 131. September 30, 1877. (Diary, Ratel Hoek.) "We have got a week's holiday. I am going to try and read through, fill in, all the MS. of *Saints and Sinners*. I am just correcting the scene between Mr. and Mrs. Drummond."

LIFE, p. 139. October 23, 1880. (Diary, Lelie Kloof.) "Had an idea about Bertie this afternoon—suicide, quite strong."

LIFE, p. 151. October 18, 1881. (Diary, London.) "I am going to try and write at my *Saints and*

*Sinners* to-morrow, but I am so sick and weak. Where am I blowing to? Where am I going to?"

LIFE, p. 153. *March* 26, 1882. (Diary, London.) "I am going to revise my *Saints and Sinners*."

LIFE, p. 157. *October* 14, 1882. (Diary, London.) "I want to get it [*New Rush*] off my hands, then my delightful *Saints and Sinners*."

LIFE, p. 157. *January* 22, 1883. (Diary, London.) "I am going to begin at my *Saints and Sinners* in earnest to-morrow; have put the MS. open and ready."

LIFE, p. 158. *September* 1883. (Diary, London.) "I am at the Jew and 'Rain in London.' Thought of a name, *From Man to Man*."

LIFE, p. 159. *November* 20, 1883. (Diary, London.) "I am going to work at *Saints and Sinners*. When will it be revised?"

LETTERS, p. 12. *February* 25, 1884. (England: To Havelock Ellis.) "I intend bringing out another book [this novel] towards the end of the year."

LIFE, p. 167. *March* 9, 1884. (Diary, London.) "I am where Bertie is at Lodging house."

LETTERS, p. 24. *July* 2, 1884. (England: To Miss Louie Ellis.) "I must get my book [this novel] copied out and ready by November."

LETTERS, p. 28. *July* 12, 1884. (England: To Ellis.) "I am so depressed thinking of my work. You see, dear one, I have so cut up and changed the thing [this novel] that there is hardly anything left, and I don't know how to put it together. This afternoon I nearly got up and burnt the whole MS. I would give hundreds of pounds if I had never touched it and [had] published it just as it was. I think it was the Devil made me unpick it. Ach, I will set my teeth and work at it and make it something better than it was. I can't have Bertie and Rebekah die. They are as much to me as ever Waldo and Lyndall were. You know, all

these months when I have been in such suffering, and have had that yearning to do something for others that I feel when I am in pain, I have always built upon the fact that *From Man to Man* will help other people, for it will help to make men more tender to women, because they will understand them better; it will make some women more tender to others; it will comfort some women by showing them that others have felt as they do. Now if I were to let it fall to the ground I should feel that so much of my life had been wasted, gone for nothing."

LETTERS, p. 32. July 16, 1884. (England: To Ellis.)

"Last night it suddenly flashed into me, the solution of all my difficulties with *From Man to Man*. It has been brooding in the background of my mind these many days, and now it has suddenly come. I shall have no more difficulty with it, it is as clear as daylight. I have got what I wanted. It is so splendid. I mean the feeling is. I get so excited I don't know what to do."

LETTERS, pp. 33 and 34. July 21, 1884. (England: To Ellis.)

"I have done a little good work to-day and yesterday; worked with such intense enjoyment, and then I know my work is good. A feeling of pleasure thrills all through me. This book is going to be awfully outspoken; *An African Farm* was nothing to it. . . . You will think perhaps that I'm writing sheets and sheets, but I'm not. It's wonderful what a lot of thought and feeling goes just to make a few lines."

LETTERS, p. 34. July 24, 1884. (England: To Ellis.)

"I want . . . to show what a wonderful power love has over the physical and through it over the mental nature, over what we call the soul, the inner self. In this book I have tried to show it. But you see, when I wrote it I did not know what the last three years have taught. I can only try to show it here and there."

LETTERS, p. 38. *August 7, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.)

"I never know *why* I write things in a certain way when I write them, but I can generally find out if I think afterwards. What you mean is what I call 'writing ribbed'! I don't know when I invented that term for a certain style of writing. I am changing a whole chapter of *From Man to Man* from what I call the plain into the 'ribbed' style. Sometimes the plain is right, sometimes the ribbed. I *think* I generally write descriptions in the plain and philosophise or paint thought in the ribbed. (You know in knitting there are two stitches, one makes a plain surface and the other makes ribs. Ribbed knitting goes up and down, up and down.)"

LETTERS, p. 43. *August 29, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.)

"Of course the subject of my book is prostitution and marriage. It is the story of a prostitute and of a married woman who loves another man, and whose husband is sensual and unfaithful. When I've got this work off my soul I shall look round at other sides of life."

LETTERS, p. 46. *November 21, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.)

"I am not adding to my book. It grows smaller and smaller. I am sure that all I am doing is improvement. Condense, condense, condense. But it's the most mentally wearing work."

LETTERS, p. 49. *December 5, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.)

"I am writing such a funny, that is to say singular, scene. I don't know how it came into my head, where Veronica goes to look at a man's clothes. It is in the place of a whole condensed chapter."

LETTERS, p. 49. *December 9, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.)

"I am working. But my story gets smaller and smaller and smaller. I can't help myself. I am driven on to make it smaller. The last part of the book doesn't need any condensing or much touching. It is good, I know. The

question is whether anybody ever gets through the first. It's that abominable Veronica and John-Ferdinand gave me all this work."

LETTERS, p. 50. *December 15, 1884.* (England: To Ellis.) "Just now I do not exist; my book exists; that is all, as far as my daily life goes: Bertie sitting there that hot day in the bush, with John-Ferdinand. That is why writing makes me happy because then my own little miserable life *is not*."

LIFE, p. 170. ? *January 1885.* (England, Diary.) "Am going to work this morning. 'Baby-Bertie goes a-dancing.' Love my work so."

LETTERS, p. 60. *February 26, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "I have not read at all to-day, or thought about anything, but Bertie and Rebekah. I have such a nasty bit to revise to-morrow. I don't think it's interesting, because I didn't enjoy writing it. It's about two mean scandal-talking women, and I can't bear writing about mean people. I don't dislike writing about wicked ones; it doesn't pain me if they're large. I've done with Rebekah's diary."

LETTERS, p. 61. *March 2, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "If I had ever read Schopenhauer, or even knew before I came to England that such a man existed, one would say I had copied whole ideas in the *African Farm* and *From Man to Man* from him. There is one passage of his on the search for philosophic truth that reads like a paraphrase of my allegory in the *African Farm*. There's something so beautiful in coming on one's very own inmost thoughts in another. In one way it's one of the greatest pleasures one has."

LETTERS, p. 62. *March 4, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "I *am* going to finish off my scandal-talking women to-day. Somehow I can't bear them. I wish there were only noble people in the world, *intense* if wicked. But there are so many of these others."

- LETTERS, p. 64. *March 17, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "I send you a little present. It's some gorse I got this morning at the top of the hill at Ecclesbourne. It's the walk Bertie went with the Jew servant. They went past there. Only it was misty, not beautiful and sunny like to-day."
- LETTERS, p. 66. *March 29, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "Only about 130 pages revised, and four or five hundred more! When will it be done? Yet I can't quicken myself. My mind must work at its own pace."
- LETTERS, p. 68. *April 2, 1885.* (England: To Ellis.) "I have got a horrid bit of my work to revise now; then I have only one more horrid bit; all the rest is delightful to the end." [*On the 4th April*]: "I am going nearly mad with my work. I have written this chapter out *nine* times. Now I'm going back to the first, only I've torn it up."
- LETTERS, p. 98. *May 13, 1886.* (England: To Ellis.) "I won't see anyone any more for the next three months till my book's done." [*On May 14th*]: "Will my book ever, ever, ever be done? Every word of it is truth to me, and more and more so as the book goes on."
- LETTERS, p. 100. *May 29, 1886.* (England: To Ellis.) "All day yesterday I was writing and thinking about the unity of the Universe and our love of truth arising from that conception. I sat up till one, writing. I couldn't sleep when I went to bed."
- LIFE, p. 172. *September 12, 1886.* (England, Diary.) "Writing out little story, too much smashed to do big work."
- LETTERS, p. 108. *January 1, 1887.* (Clarens: To Ellis.) "Am thinking of having *From Man to Man* copied by typist when I have money."
- LETTERS, p. 112. *March 30, 1887.* (Clarens: To Ellis.) "There came to me yesterday such a beautiful new scene for my book. It helped me

so; but I have no strength to write it. It's where Rebekah says: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that trespass against us.' Oh, Harry, just for *one year's* health to work in!"

LETTERS, p. 120. *June 20, 1887.* (England: To Ellis.)

"Do you know, I'm going to finish my book. I'm getting jolly hard, like I used to be at the Cape. I can work now."

LIFE, p. 179. *December 7, 1887.* (Alassio: Diary.)

"I worked all day, up and down, planning. Didn't know before that Rebekah went to sea in a sailing ship and heard 'From too much love of living.' Some woman whose heart is lonely will be comforted by what I write, as I have been by what others write."

LETTERS, p. 124. *December 12, 1887.* (Alassio: To Ellis.)

"I love my new book so, a hundred times better than I ever loved *An African Farm*." [On *December 13th*]: "Such an odd kind of peace and rest is with me ever since I made a scene to-day in which Rebekah talks to her little son [? sons]."

LETTERS, p. 125. *December 18, 1887.* (Alassio: To Ellis.)

"Am working hard. Never come back to myself sometimes for a couple of days and that is the only way in which work can be done. *From Man to Man* will be quite different from any other book that ever was written, whether good or bad I can't say. I never *think*; the story leads me, not I it, and I guess it's more likely to make an end of me than I am ever to make an end of it."

LETTERS, p. 129. *January 24, 1888.* (Alassio: To Ellis.)

"Yes, it's part of Rebekah's Diary I sent you. Rebekah is me; I don't know which is which any more. But Bertie is me, and Drummond is me, and all is me, only not Veronica and Mrs. Drummond (except a little!). Sometimes I really don't know whether I am I or one of the others." [On the 27th January, p. 130]: "I am



writing about those two terrible women, Veronica and Mrs. Drummond. It is so terrible to have to realise them and grapple with them. I bear all kinds of wickedness, but not meanness and smallness. I shall be glad to get back to Bertie and Rebekah, my beloveds. If they are ever so real to anyone as to me, how real they will be."

LIFE, p. 180. *January 27, 1888.* (Alassio, Diary.) "I am doing chapter with Veronica and Mrs. Drummond. I am doing the outburst; that relieves me so."

LETTERS, p. 138. *July 22, 1888.* (England: To Ellis.) "Please send back 'Prelude.' Some little bits are not in yet, one where she apologises to the baby for not having milk for it. Poor little thing! I do love her so."

LIFE, p. 182. *February 2, 1889.* (Mentone, Diary.) "I am copying my 'Prelude.' I see my way clear to the end now. I'm so well."

LETTERS, p. 153. *February 2, 1889.* (Mentone: To Havelock Ellis.) "My 'Prelude' is too lovely for words. . . . The worst of this book of mine is that it's so womanly. I think it's the most womanly book that ever was written, and God knows that I've willed it otherwise!"

LETTERS, p. 157. *March 17, 1889.* (Mentone: To Mrs. J. H. Philpot.) "Oh, I love the two women in my book so. I'm getting to love women more and more. I love men too, so very much—only they don't need me."

LETTERS, p. 160. *April 5, 1889.* (Paris: To Ellis.) "Do you think I could write Bertie's death scene, do you think I could show all the inmost workings of Rebekah's heart, if I realised anyone would ever read it?" [*On April 11th, p. 161*]: "I'll be glad to get back to my novel. I love it more than I love anything in the world, more than any place or person. I've never loved any work so, and I haven't cared for it all these years."

LETTERS, p. 175. *January 7, 1890.* (Cape Town: To Ellis.) "Newlands is the next station to Rondebosch, where Rebekah lived. I always think when I go near Rondebosch I fancy I shall meet Rebekah coming down one of the avenues. Not Lyndall, not even Waldo, have been so absolutely real to me as she and Bertie. I cannot believe they never lived. I *say* I believe it, but I don't. You see they have lived with me fifteen years."

LETTERS, p. 199. *November 6, 1890.* (Matjesfontein: To Ellis.) "This life is so peaceful. I'm happy, like when I was living on those farms, writing *An African Farm*. I *feel just the same*. Life is so precious to me. You know, I think in this book [*From Man to Man*] I *will* say what I want to say. I mean I've sometimes felt as if I couldn't make this book say everything. I want to say as *An African Farm* said what I wanted to say then. But it will! All that is in that 'Sunlight Lay' is in it, only simply in an objective form—the first, second and third Heaven."

LIFE, p. 251. *April 1893.* (Matjesfontein: To S.C.C.S.) "You know I have so many books *written*, all the real work done, needing only patient revising, and that I can only give when my nature is alive and intense; I dare not touch my work at a lower mood than the mood I wrote it in, or I shall spoil it."

LIFE, p. 254. *April 1893.* (Matjesfontein: To S.C.C.S.) [*She was to sail from Cape Town on the 3rd May. Her plan was*]: "To leave England in August for some little German or Italian town and settle down there quietly and steadily to copying and revising eight or nine hours a day, then, in about a year and eight months from now, either the *Buddhist Priest's Wife* or *From Man to Man* or one of my big books will be ready. I shall then be independent." [She was back again in Cape Town late in October.]

LIFE, p. 271. July 1894. [Extract from the *Life*.]  
"She said that, if she had two years at the Home-  
stead, Kimberley, she would finish her two 'big'  
novels, *From Man to Man* and *The Buddhist Priest's*  
*Wife*."

LETTERS, p. 217. February 28, 1895. (Kimberley :  
To S.C.C.S.) "While you are at Rondebosch go  
for a walk in my dear wood and see that old  
Summer House. That part is the scene where  
*From Man to Man* is laid. Rebekah lives there  
when she is married, and always walks in those  
woods."

LIFE, p. 286. September 1895. (Kimberley : To Mrs.  
John Brown.) [Extract from *Life*] : "In Sep-  
tember 1895 she had written to Mrs. Brown that  
she was working very hard, and that, if she kept  
well, her book on South Africa [*Stray Thoughts*]  
would be out early in 1896 and her big novel  
[*From Man to Man*] before the end of the same  
year."

LIFE, p. 339. (Hanover, Cape Colony, 1901-1902.)  
[During these two years she revised 'The Pre-  
lude,' the first six chapters of *From Man to Man*  
and part of the seventh.]

LIFE, p. 347. June 4, 1902. (Diary, Hanover.) "I  
am revising the sixth chapter of *From Man to Man*."  
[A few days later, p. 348] : "Have been copying  
out all the evening chapter 7 of *From Man to Man*."

LIFE, p. 349. June 24, 1906. (Diary, Hanover.) "I  
am revising Rebekah's letter to her husband."

LIFE, p. 349. October 10, 1906. (Diary, Matjesfon-  
tein.) "I went for a lovely walk in the afternoon  
to my koppie, Rebekah's. I'm so happy."

LIFE, p. 350. February 20, 1907. (Diary, Hanover.)  
"I am just finishing 'You Can't Capture the  
Ideal.'"

LETTERS, pp. 263-264. February 25, 1907. (Hanover :  
To S.C.C.S.) ". . . and that makes the use of a  
writer : not that he expresses what no one else

thinks and feels, but he is the voice of what others feel and can't say. If only the powers that shape existence give me the strength to finish this book [*From Man to Man*], I shall not have that agonised feeling over my life that I have over the last ten years, that I have done nothing of good for any human creature. I am not sure of the book's artistic worth: to judge of that from the purely intellectual standpoint one must stand at a distance from one's own or anyone else's work. But I know it gives a voice to that which exists in the hearts of many women and some men, I know I have only tried to give expression to what was absolutely forced on me, that I have not made up one line for the sake of making it up."

LETTERS, p. 264. *March 5, 1907.* (Hanover: To S.C.C.S.) "I am so absorbed and interested in my book I don't like to think of anything else."

LETTERS, p. 265. *March 20, 1907.* (Hanover: To S.C.C.S.) [*A woman friend had sent her some papers on the Contagious Diseases Acts*]: "To me there is nothing else in the world that touches me the same way. You will see, if you read my novel, that all other matters seem to me small compared to matters of sex, and prostitution is its most agonising central point. Prostitution, especially the prostitution of men of themselves to their most brutal level, can't really be touched till man not only says but feels woman is his equal, his brother human to whom he must give as much as he takes, and the franchise is one step towards bringing that about."

LIFE, p. 350. *April 28, 1907.* (Diary, Hanover.) "I like Rebekah's letter; it's too long all to have been written in one night, but that doesn't matter."

LETTERS, p. 268. *May 23, 1907.* (Hanover: To S.C.C.S.) "Oh, I wish I could get my book done before I die. It may not be any good; but I feel I have to do it. I used to feel I couldn't die till it was done, that fate wouldn't let it be. Now I

know that anything may be; you trust and hope for years, but things never come. If one has done one's best, that is all. . . ." [*On the 27th, p. 269*]: "Oh, if I could be under conditions to finish it. I've set my heart so on finishing it before the end comes. I could do so much work now if I was strong and could get fresh air. My brain has never been so clear and strong before in one way. I tried to go for a walk yesterday but came back staggering and am only now recovering from it."

LETTERS, p. 274. *October 22, 1907.* (De Aar: To Mrs. Francis Smith.) "The novel I am revising now is dedicated to her ['my little sister, Ellie.'] She lived only eighteen months, but for that 18 my life was entirely in and through her, and I watched her die. The novel I am revising is dedicated to her, and the opening chapter ['The Prelude'] is about a little girl's feelings when her new little sister is born. I sometimes think my great love for women and girls, *not* because they are myself, but because they are *not* myself, comes from my love to her."

LETTERS, p. 289. *October 1909.* (De Aar: To Mrs. Francis Smith.) "I've got a bit about him [the old Greek sculptor of the Winged Victory of Samothrace] in my big novel. Oh, I do hope I shall live to finish it. All the things and people in it are my little children, and you see they'll die, if I die first. I only want to live for that, nothing else."

LETTERS, pp. 290-291. *October 1909.* (Cape Town: To Mrs. Francis Smith.) "I am sending you 'The Prelude.' Send it back when you've read it. I've got to revise it yet. It's just as it came to me many years ago one day on the Riviera. I *know* you'll understand it. I love it specially because it came to me in such a curious way. I wrote the rough draft of this novel years and years

ago when I was quite a young girl, before I went to England [that is, before 1881]. In England I was too much absorbed in social problems ever to read it over even. One day, I think it was in the winter of 1888, I was on the Riviera at Alassio; I was sitting at my dear old desk writing an article on the Bushmen and giving a description of their skulls; when suddenly, in an instant, the whole of this little Prelude *flashed* on me. You know those folded-up views of places one buys; you take hold of one end and all the pictures unfold one after the other as quick as light. That was how it *flashed* on me. I started up and paced about the room. I felt absolutely astonished. I hadn't thought of my novel for months, I hadn't looked at it for years. I'd never dreamed of writing a prelude to it,—I just sat down and wrote it out. And do you know what I found out—after I'd written it?—that it's a picture in small, a kind of allegory, of the life of the woman in the book!! It's one of the strangest things I know of. My mind must have been working at it *unconsciously*, though I knew nothing of it—otherwise how did it come?"

LETTERS, pp. 291-292. December 14, 1909. (Muizenberg: To Mrs. Francis Smith.) "Did you get my little 'Prelude'? Please return it, darling. In the novel, when the little girl grows up, she spends some of the most important moments of her life at Muizenberg close to this spot. It's curious that I feel as though some great tragic events of my own life had taken place here. I walk again and again to the spot where years ago 'Farmer Peck's' little thatched house [now the Grand Hotel] used to stand, and think, 'Yes, here Rebekah walked.' I don't think anyone else can have an idea how real and how 'out of oneself,' something not made up by oneself but which one *simply knows*, all these people are."

LETTERS, p. 312. *July* 29, 1912. (De Aar: To Miss Emily Hobhouse.) "I have never been able to add a line to any of my books since I saw you. You see, as soon as one writes and feels, one gets excited, and as soon as one gets excited one gets faint."

LETTERS, p. 321. *March* 1913. (Muizenberg: To Miss Emily Hobhouse.) "It isn't the pain and weakness one minds, it's the not being able to work. My one novel especially I would have liked so to finish. I feel that if only one lonely and struggling woman read it and found strength and comfort from it one would not feel one had lived quite in vain. I seem to have done so little with my life."

LETTERS, p. 358. 1918. (London: To Mrs. Francis Smith.) "Would you, sometime, tell me something: when you read that little 'Prelude' to my book I showed you the other day, did you think it was a *made-up thing*, like an allegory, or did you think it was real *about myself*? Please tell me, because, if I haven't made it clear, I must. I thought it was quite clear [that it was about herself], but the only other person to whom I've shown it didn't understand."

S.C.C.S.

CAPE TOWN,  
*March*, 1926.

THE PRELUDE  
THE CHILD'S DAY





## THE CHILD'S DAY

THE little mother lay in the agony of child-birth. Outside all was still but the buzzing of the bees, some of which now and then found their way in to the half-darkened room. The scent of the orange trees and of the flowers from the garden beyond, came in through the partly-opened window, with the rich dry odour of a warm, African, summer morning. The little mother groaned in her anguish.

Old Ayah, the Hottentot woman, stood at the bedside with her hands folded and her long fingers crooked, the veins on the back standing out like cords. She said, "O ja, God! Wat zal ons nou zeg?"<sup>1</sup> and readjusted the little black shawl upon her shoulders. The window was open three inches, and the blind was drawn below it to keep out the heat. The mother groaned.

At the end of the passage in the dining-room the father sat with his elbows on the deal table and his head in his hands, reading Swedenborg; but the words had no clear meaning for him. Every now and then he looked up at the clock over the fireplace. It was a quarter before ten, and the house was very quiet.

At the back of the house, on the kitchen doorstep, stood Rebekah, the little five-years-old daughter. She looked up into the intensely blue sky, and then down to the ducks who were waddling before the lowest step, picking up the crusts she had thrown to them. She wore a short pink cotton dress with little white knickerbockers buttoned below the knees and a white kappie with a large curtain that came almost to her waist.

<sup>1</sup> "Oh yes, God! What shall we now say?"

She took the kappie off and looked up again into the sky. There was something almost oppressive in the quiet. The Kaffir maids had been sent home to their huts, except one who was heating water in the kitchen, and the little Kaffirs were playing away beyond the kraals on the old kraal heap. It was like Sunday. She drew a slight sigh, and looked up again into the sapphire-blue sky: it was going to be very hot. The farmhouse stood on the spur of a mountain, and the thorn trees in the flat below were already shimmering in the sunlight. After a while she put on her kappie and walked slowly down the steps and across the bare space which served for a farmyard. Beyond it she passed into the low bushes. She soon came to a spot just behind the kraal where the ground was flat and bare; the surface soil had been washed off, and a circular floor of smooth, and unbroken stone was exposed, like the smooth floor of a great round room. The bushes about were just high enough to hide her from the farmhouse, though it was only fifty yards off. She stepped on to the stone slowly, on tiptoe. She was building a house here. It stood in the centre of the stone floor; it was a foot and a half high and about a foot across, and was built of little flat stones placed very carefully on one another; and it was round like a tower. The lower story opened on to the ground by a little doorway two inches high; in the upper story there was a small door in the wall; and a ladder made of sticks, with smaller sticks fastened across, led up to it. She stepped up to the house very softly. She was building it for mice. Once a Kaffir boy told her he had built a house of stones, and as he passed the next day a mouse ran out at the front door. She had thought a great deal of it; always, she seemed to see the mouse living in the house and going in and out at the front door; and at last she built this one. She had built it in two stories, so that the family could live on the lower floor and keep their grain on the top. She had put a great flat stone, to roof the lower story,

and another flat stone for the roof on the very top : and she had put a moss carpet in the lower floor for them to sleep on, and corn, ready for them to use, above. She stepped very softly up to the house and peeped in at the little door; there was nothing there but the brown moss. She sat down flat on the stone before it, and peered in. Half, she expected the mice to come; and half, she knew they never would !

Presently she took a few little polished flat stones out of her pocket and began to place them carefully round the top to form a turret; then she straightened the ladder a little. Then she sat, watching the house. It was too hot to go and look for more stones. After a while she stretched out her right hand, and drew its sides together, and made the fingers look as it were a little mouse; and moved it softly along the stone, creeping, creeping up to the door; she let it go in. Then after a minute she drew it slowly back and sat up. It was becoming intensely hot now; the sun, beating down on the stone, drew little beads of perspiration on her forehead.

How still it was ! She listened to hear whether anyone from the house would call her. It was long past ten o'clock, and she was never allowed to be out in the sun so late. She sat listening : then she got a curious feeling that something was happening at the house and stood up quickly, and walked away towards it.

As she passed the dining-room window, whose lower edge was on a level with her chin, she looked in. Her father was gone; but his glasses and his open book still lay on the table. Rebekah walked round to the kitchen door. Even the ducks were gone; no one was in the kitchen, only the flames were leaping up and crackling in the open fireplace, and the water was spluttering out of the mouth of the big black kettle. She stood for a moment to watch it. Then a sound struck her ear. She walked with quick, sharp steps into the dining-room, and threw her kappie on the table, and stood listening. Again the sound came, faint, and

strange. She walked out into the long passage into which all the bedrooms opened. Suddenly the sound became loud and clear from her mother's bedroom. Rebekah walked quickly up the coconut-matted passage and knocked at her mother's door, three short, sharp knocks with her knuckle. There was a noise of moving and talking inside; then the door opened a little.

"I want to come in!—Please, what is the matter?"

Someone said, "Shall she come in?" and then a faint voice answered, "Yes, let her come."

Rebekah walked in; there was but a little light coming in under the blind through the slightly opened window. Her mother was lying in the large bed and her father standing at the bedside. A strange woman from the next farm, whom she had never seen before, sat in the elbow chair in the corner beyond the bed, with something on her lap; old Ayah stood near the drawers, folding some linen cloths.

Rebekah stood for a moment motionless and hesitating on the ox skin in the middle of the floor; then she walked straight up to the strange woman in the corner.

"Ask her to show you what she has got, Rebekah," said her father.

The woman unfolded a large brown shawl, inside of which there was a white one. Even in the dim light in the corner you could see a little red face, with two hands doubled up on the chest, peeping out from it.

Rebekah looked.

"Was it *this* that made that noise?" she asked.

The woman smiled and nodded.

Her father came up.

"Kiss it, Rebekah; it is your little sister."

Rebekah looked quietly at it.

"No—I won't.—I don't like it," she said slowly.

But her father had already moved across the room to speak to old Ayah.

Rebekah turned sharply on her heel and walked to the large bed. Her mother lay on it with her eyes

shut. Rebekah stood at the foot, her eyes on a level with the white coverlet, looking at her mother.

As she stood there she heard old Ayah whisper to the father, and they both went out, to the spare bedroom opposite. The strange woman came and bent over the mother, and said something to her; she nodded her head without opening her eyes. The woman made a space at her side, and lay the white bundle down in it; she put the baby's head on the mother's arm. The mother opened her eyes then, and looked down at it with a half smile; and drew the quilt up a little higher to shield it. Rebekah watched them: then she walked softly to the door.

"Please open it for me," she said. The handle was too high for her.

The woman let her out.

For a moment she stood outside the closed door looking at it, her tiny features curiously set almost with the firmness of a woman's; then she turned and walked down the passage. She saw her father and old Ayah come out of the spare room. Old Ayah locked the door and put the key into her pocket, and they went back to her mother's bedroom.

Rebekah picked up her kappie from the dining-room table, put it on, and went out again on to the steps at the kitchen door. The sun was blazing in the yard now, the very stones seemed to throw up a red reflection. Standing on the top step in the shade, Rebekah shivered with heat.

Then she wandered slowly down the steps and across the yard. She could feel the ground burn under her feet, through the soles of her little shoes. She walked to her flat stone. The mouse house stood baking in the sun with all the little crystals in the rock glittering. She sat down before the house, drawing her skirts carefully under her, the rock burnt so. She drew her knees up to her chin, and folded her arms about them, and sat looking at the mouse house. She knew she ought not to be there in the hot sun; she knew it

was wicked; but she liked the heat to burn her that morning.

After a while the little drops of perspiration began to gather under her eyes and on her upper lip; she would not wipe them off. Her face began to get very red, and her temples to throb; the heat was fierce. She looked out at the mouse house from under her white kappie with blinking red eyes. She could feel the heat scorching her arms through her little cotton dress, and she liked it.

By half-past eleven the heat was so intense she could not bear it, and there began to be a sound like a little cicada singing in her ears: so she got up, and walked slowly towards the house; but did not go in at the kitchen door.

She went to the back, where the wall of the house made a deep shadow, and went to the window of the spare room. It was her favourite place, to which she went whenever she wanted to be quite safe and alone. No one ever went there. The beds were generally left unmade till visitors came, with only the mattresses and pillows on them, and under one bed she kept her box of specially prized playthings. She unclosed the outer shutters. The window was so low that she could easily raise the sash and climb in from the ground. She pushed it up, and stepped into the room. It was beautifully cool there and almost dark: she drew up the blind a very little to let in some light. She was walking towards the bed under which her box was, when something struck her eye. On the large table in the middle of the room there was a something with a white sheet spread over it. Rebekah walked up to it: this was something quite new.

She drew a chair to the side of the table and climbed up. She lifted the top of the sheet. Under it there was another sheet and a pillow; and, with its head on the pillow, dressed in pure white, was a little baby. Rebekah stood upright on the chair, holding the sheet in her hand.

After a while she let it down carefully, but so turning it back that the baby's face and hand were exposed. How fast it was sleeping!

She bent down and peered into its face. There was a curious resemblance between her own small, sharply marked features and those of the baby. She put out her forefinger gently and touched one of its hands. They were very cool. She watched it for some time; then she climbed down and went to the wardrobe where the best going-to-town clothes were kept hanging. With some difficulty she unhooked a little fur-trimmed red cape of her own, with this she climbed back on to the chair and laid [it] across the baby's feet. It was evidently not warm enough, though the day was hot.

She bent down over it again. On the top of its head was a little mass of soft, down-like curly black hair; she put her face down softly and touched the hair with her cheek and kissed it. She dared not kiss its face for fear of waking it. She sat down beside it, motionless, for a long time, on the edge of the table. Seeing it did not stir, after a time she climbed down, and taking off her shoes and leaving them at the foot of the table, went on tip-toe to the bed and drew from under it her box.

It was a large soap box with an odd collection of things in it. On the top was a dried monkey's skin and a large alphabet book with coloured pictures; below were different little boxes and bags; some held stones; one was full of brightly coloured beetles and grasshoppers she had picked up dead; in one, all by itself, was a very large bright crystal, carefully wrapped in cotton-wool and tied with a string. Below, was an oblong-shaped, common brown stone about eighteen inches in length; it was dressed in doll's clothes and it had a shawl wrapped round it. Beside it was a small shop-doll with pink cheeks and flaxen hair, which she had got on her last birthday; but it had no shawl and its face was turned to the wood. The



stone she had had two years, and she loved it; the shop doll was only interesting. Besides these there was a round Bushman stone with a hole in the middle, which she had picked up behind the kraal, and a flat slate-coloured stone with the impression of a fossilised leaf, which she found on the path going up to the mountain; and, at the very bottom in the corner was a workbox, with a silver thimble and needles and cottons inside, which she thought very grand; and two little brightly coloured boxes with chocolates and peppermints with holes through them like whistles, which she had got on Christmas Day, but thought too pretty to eat; and there was also a head of Queen Victoria, cut out of the tinsel label of a sardine tin, and which she kept wrapped up in white paper.

She took all the things out of the box and handled them carefully, deliberating for a while. At last she selected the alphabet book, the Bushman stone, the silver thimble and a paper of needles, Queen Victoria's head, and a stick of chocolate. When she had packed the other things back, she went with them to the table. She climbed up on the chair. She lay the thimble and paper of needles on the cushion on the left of the baby's head, and the Bushman stone and the tinsel Queen Victoria head on the right. Very gently and slowly she slipped the alphabet book under the baby's doubled-up arm; and then, turning back the silver paper at one end of the chocolate stick, she forced the other end very gently into its closed fist, leaving the uncovered end near to its mouth. Then she stood upright on the chair with her hands folded before her, looking down at them all, with a curious contentment about her mouth.

After a little time she got down and went to her box at the foot of the bed, and sat down upon it; to wait till the baby woke.

Her face was seamed under the eyes with lines hot perspiration and dust had left, and she was very tired. She leaned her arm on the bed and rested her head on it.

At half-past one it was dinner-time, and old Ayah could not find her. She often crept in the heat of the day behind the piano or into the wagon-loft, and fell asleep there where no one could discover her. So old Ayah put some dinner for her in a tin plate in the oven to keep warm.

Then everyone went to lie down; the shutters of all the doors and windows were closed, and there was not a sound in all the house but the buzzing of the flies in the darkened rooms.

Only old Ayah did not sleep to-day, and was sewing a piece of white calico into a long, narrow, white robe with a stiff frill down the front for a tiny baby. She sat working in the dining-room with the shutters very slightly apart to let in enough light.

When she had done it she went down the passage to the door of the spare room and unlocked it.

The first thing she noticed was that the outer shutters she had left carefully closed were partly open, that the window had been raised, and the blind was an inch or two drawn up. She walked to the table. The baby lay with the sheet removed from its face, and the Bushman stone, and thimble, and needles, and a picture, on its pillow, and the alphabet book under its arm, and the chocolate stick in its hand. She glanced round. Rebekah was still sitting on her box at the foot of the bed with her stockinged feet crossed and her head resting on her arm on the mattress, fast asleep; her shoes standing side by side at the foot of the table.

Old Ayah walked up to her and shook her by the shoulder. Rebekah opened her eyes slowly and looked at her dreamily, without raising her head.

"What are you doing in here? Couldn't you see, if the door was locked, that you weren't meant to get in here?" she said in the Cape Dutch she always spoke.

Rebekah sat up, still looking round vacantly; then in an instant all came back to her and she stood up.

"Aren't you a wicked, naughty child, letting all

the flies and the sun come in! What have you been doing?"

"Oh, please don't talk so loud," whispered Rebekah, quickly, bending forward and stretching out her hand; "please, you'll wake it!"

"O Lord!" said old Ayah, looking at her, "what would your mother say if she knew you'd been in here playing with that blessed baby! You naughty child, how dared you touch it!"

"It's mine: I found it!" said Rebekah, walking softly up to the foot of the table.

Old Ayah came up too.

"Oh, please," said Rebekah, putting out her hand again, "*don't* touch it! Don't touch it! I *don't* want it waked!"

She looked up at old Ayah with full lustrous eyes, as a bitch looks when you handle her pups.

"O my God!" said old Ayah, "the child is mad! How can it be yours? It's your mother's."

"It is mine," said Rebekah slowly: "I found it. Mietje found hers in the hut, and Katje found hers behind the kraal. My mother found hers that cries so, in the bedroom. *This one* is mine!"

"O Lord, Lord!" cried old Ayah. "I tell you this is your mother's baby; she had two, and this one is dead. I put it here myself."

Rebekah looked at her.

"This one is dead: it'll never open its eyes again; it can't breathe."

The old Hottentot woman began taking the alphabet book from under its arm and the stick from its hand, and took the things from the pillow.

Rebekah did not look at her; her gaze was fixed on the baby's face.

"Here, take these things!"

But Rebekah raised out her hand, and touched the baby's feet; a coldness went up her arm, even through the sheet. She dropped her hand.

"Child, what is it? Here!—take your shoes!"

She thrust the shoes into her hand. Rebekah held them, but let them slide between her fingers on to the floor; she was still staring at the table.

Old Ayah gathered up the child's apron and put into it the things she had taken from the baby, and forced the shoes back into her other hand.

"Here, take them, I say; and go away! And get your face washed and your hair done; and tell Mietje to put you on a clean dress and white pinafore. What would your mother say to see you looking such an ugly, dirty little fright!"

Rebekah turned away slowly, with the gathered apron in one hand and the shoes in the other, and walked to the door. When she got there she turned and looked dreamily back; then she went out into the passage.

After she had had her face washed and her hair brushed, and had got on a clean starched pink dress and a white over-all pinafore, she went to the dining-room. Old Ayah had put her plate of warmed dinner on the table ready for her, and she sat down on the bench to eat it. She felt better now she was washed and had a clean starched dress on.

The heat outside was still very oppressive, and only a little light came in through the cracks in the shutter; and the blue flies were buzzing round everywhere in the dark. She did not feel very hungry, and played with her dinner; but she drank all the water in the mug. Then she pushed her plate from her, found her kappie and went out into the great front room. All was quiet there also, and almost quite dark. She took a large worn picture-book from the side table, and opened the double door and went out on to the front stoep. The vine leaves on the front wall hung dry and stiff, and even the orange leaves on the great orange trees before the door hung curled and flaccid.

It was nearly three o'clock, and the heat was hardly less intense than at midday, though there was already shade on that side of the house. The hollyhocks and

dahlias in the flower garden beyond the orange trees were hanging their heads, and the four o'clocks were curled up tight though the trees sheltered them.

She walked down through the flower garden, on, into the orchard beyond.

All was very still and brown there also. The little peach trees that stood in rows were shedding their half-ripe fruit, which fell into the long yellow grass beneath them, and the fig trees along the wall had curled up the edges of their leaves. Rebekah followed a little winding footpath among the grass to the middle of the orchard, where a large pear tree stood, with a gnarled and knotted stem. There was a bench under the tree, and the grass grew very long all about it. She looked around to find a spot where the tree cast a deeper shade than elsewhere. Here she walked round and round on the grass, like a dog, and then lay down on her back in the place she had made. It was like a nest, with the grass standing several inches high all round.

She drew up her legs, cocking one knee over the other, so that one foot waved in the air.

It was very nice. She lay for a while with her hands clasped across the top of her head, from which she had thrown her white kappie. The pear-tree leaves were so thick overhead, you could hardly see any sky through them. She yawned luxuriously. Beyond the edges of the pear branches, here and there as you looked through half-closed eyes, were strips of blue sky, and some great, white masses of thunder cloud were showing in them, like ships sailing in the blue. She watched them for a while with her eyes half shut; then she took up the book that lay on the grass at her side, stood it open on her chest against her knee, and gently waved the foot that was cocked up in the air.

The book opened of itself about the middle at a certain page. On it was a picture: Peter, a great boy with a red face looking out through the top of the letter P, and at his feet was a little pig with a curled tail. Besides this there were in the picture, in the

distance, fields and a stile, and a winding path leading far away over the hills; and in the foreground was a milestone with weeds growing around it; below was written "P stands for Peter and Pig."

She had had the book ever since she could remember; she had kept it very clean; there was no torn place or mark in it; but the page of *Peter and his Pig* was brown and worn round the edges. It was her favourite picture. Whenever she looked at it she wanted to make up stories. She had made one long story about it: how people were not kind to Peter and he had no one to love him but his pig, and how they both ran away together by that far-off road that went over the hill and saw all the beautiful things on the other side. She liked this book better than her new books. She stood it up on her chest and looked into the picture. But to-day it had no meaning; it suggested nothing. Then she looked away again beyond the edges of the pear branches, where two great masses of white cloud were floating in the blue; they dazzled her eyes so she closed them.

Presently she made a story that one of those clouds was a ship and she was sailing in it (she had never seen the sea or a ship, but she was always making stories about them), and, as she sailed, she came at last to an island. The ship stopped there. And on the edge of the shore was a lady standing, dressed in beautiful clothes, all gold and silver. When she stepped on to the shore, the lady came up to her, and bowed to her, and said, "I am Queen Victoria; who are you?"

And Rebekah answered her: "I am the little Queen Victoria of South Africa."

And they bowed to each other.

(The child under the tree moved her head very slightly, without opening her eyes.)

The Queen asked her where she came from. She said, "From a country far away from here: not such a very nice country! Things are not always nice there—only sometimes they are."

The Queen said, "I have many islands that belong to me: but this island belongs to no one; why don't you come and live here? No one will ever scold you here, and you can do just what you like."

Rebekah said, "I should like it very much; but I must first go and fetch my books out of the ship." And when she had brought her books, she said to the Queen, "Here is a little box of presents I have got for all the people who live on the farm where I used to live; for my father and my mother and the servants and the little Kaffirs—and even old Ayah. Would you please give it to them as you go past?" And the Queen said she would; and she said, "Good-bye, Little Queen Victoria!" And Rebekah said, "Good-bye, Big Queen Victoria!" and they bowed to each other; and the old Queen went away in the ship in which she had come.

Then she was all alone on her island. (She had never seen an island except a lump of ground in the furrow, with some thyme and forget-me-nots growing on it; but when she grew up she found she had pictured that island just as a real island might have been!) The island had many large trees and bushes, and the grass and thyme and forget-me-nots grew down to the water's edge. She walked a little way, and she came to a river with trees on each side, and on it were two swans swimming, with their long white necks bent. She had had a book with the picture of a swan swimming in a lake, and she had always thought she must die of joy if she should see a real swan swimming up and down; and here were two!

A little further, on the bank of the river, there was a little house standing. It was as high in proportion to her as grown-up people's houses are in proportion to them. The doors were just high enough for her to go in and out at, and all things fitted her. One room was covered with books from the floor to the ceiling, with a little empty shelf for her own books, and there was a microscope on the table like her father's which

she was never allowed to touch; but this one was hers!

Outside, in the garden, there were little rakes and spades that came as high as her shoulder. (Rebekah had always had to dig with a man's spade that made her arms ache.) At the side of the house there were all the things lying one uses for building houses; and a pile of bricks; and a bit of bare ground where you could make as much mud as you liked and make more bricks. But she hadn't time to stay and make bricks then. She went on further.

Presently she came to a place where the trees hung very low down over the water, and the grass was very thick; and there, from a large white bush, hanging right over, and nearly touching the water, she saw a snow-white pod, nearly as long as her arm. It was like a pea pod, but it was covered all over with a white, frosted silver. She reached down over the edge and tried to pick it. It was very heavy; at last she broke it off, and carried it away in her pinafore, and she sat on a bank with it on her lap. She pressed with her finger all up and down the joint, and slowly the pod cracked and cracked, and opened from one end to the other, like a mimosa pod does.

And there, lying inside it, like the seeds lie inside the pod of a mimosa tree—was a little baby! It was quite pink and naked. It was as long in proportion to her, as a Kaffir woman's new baby is in proportion to a Kaffir woman, when she first finds it. She tried to lift it out: but it was tied to the pod like the mimosa seeds are, with a little curled-up string. She broke the string and lifted it out, then she wrapped it up in her pinafore and skirt and put its head on her arm and carried it home.

(The book which was still standing up against her knee, here fell over softly into the breast of the child under the pear tree.)

When she got it home she fed it with milk from a tiny bottle as one feeds a hand-lamb, and she wrapped



it up in a soft white shawl, and put it on her bed and lay down beside it. She held it close against her with one arm, and stroked its hair softly with the other hand.

"Go to sleep, my baby," she said; "you must be very tired this first day. The world is so large. Tomorrow you can see all the things, and I'll tell you about them."

"If you should wake in the night, my baby," she said presently, "and hear anything, don't be afraid: just call to me. I'll be close by. And, if you hear the clock ticking, *don't* think it means any of those dreadful things—it doesn't! I'll stop it if it makes you sad. And, if you want to see the angels, then just shut your eyes and press on them *hard* with your two fingers, like this——" (The child under the tree moved her hand as though to raise it to her eyes, but did not.)—"Those black things with the light all round which you see going round and round when you press your eyes, are the angels' heads; just like it says in the hymn:—

'And through the hours of darkness keep  
Their watch around my bed.'

They are good angels, though they are black in the middle. I always used to see them when I was a little girl, and I pressed my eyes. I'll put a chocolate stick under your pillow, that you can find and suck it if you feel lonely. *Don't* be sorry you are come into the world, my baby. I will take care of you!"

She was going to rise from the bed, then she remembered other things that had to be said, and lay down again.

"When you are grown older, I'll teach you the multiplication table and spelling, because you can't grow up if you don't know these things. I know how bad it is to learn them; I had to when I was little, and so at last I grew up.

"Kaffirs grow up without learning tables or spelling;

that's why it would be nice to be a Kaffir. If you've something hard to learn, pray God to help you : sometimes he does and sometimes he doesn't. If he doesn't, it's because you've prayed wrong ; but it's no use praying again on that same day, especially if it's hot ;— wait till the next."

Again there was a long pause.

"My baby, I shall *never* call *you* 'a strange child !' You can climb trees and tear your clothes ; but, if you find any birds' nests, you mustn't take the eggs ; you can just put your hand in and feel ; and, if it's a very little nest, you must only put one finger in. Especially cock-o-veet's eggs you must *not* take ! Kaffir boys take birds' eggs."

Again there was a pause.

"My baby, shall I tell you a little story ? It's one I made myself, and a rather nice little story :—

"Once there was a little girl, and she went for a walk in the bush. And when she had gone a little way, a cock-o-veet<sup>1</sup> came flying up to her and took hold of her pinafore by the corner with its beak. And the little girl said, 'Cock-o-veet, dear, what is it ?'

"And the cock-o-veet said, 'Make your hand like a little round nest.'

"So she made it so—so !" (The child as she lay under the tree with her closed eyes drew the fingers of her right hand together and made a hollow.)

"And the cock-o-veet sat down in her hand ; and when it got up, there—was—a little—real—blue—egg—lying there !

"And the little girl said, 'O, cock-o-veet !'

"And the cock-o-veet said : 'Put the egg in my nest, and I will sit on it and make a little bird come out, for you !' And the cock-o-veet showed the little girl where her nest was ; and she put the egg in ; and the cock-o-veet sat down on it, and said, 'Good-bye ; I'll call you when it comes out.'

[<sup>1</sup> Kokkewiet : The Bush-shrike, a very handsome bird with resonant call notes of great beauty—a prime favourite of Olive's.]

"And when she had gone further, she saw some monkeys sitting up in the high trees, little, long-tail monkeys; and they put their hands out to her. And she looked up and said, 'O, little monkeys, what do you want?'

"And they said, 'Come up in the trees and have tea with us.'

"And she said, 'What kind of tea do you have, O monkeys?'

"And they said, 'Nam-nams and Kaffir plums.'

"So she climbed up and sat with them on a branch, and they gave her of their nam-nams and Kaffir plums with their little black hands, and she gave them some cakes out of a little bag she had with her.

"And when they had finished the monkeys kissed her, and she kissed them, and she climbed down and went on.

"And presently she came to a place where some very large rocks were lying deep in the bush, and the trees were hanging over them, and it was dark under the rock. And the little girl thought it looked rather like a tiger's sleeping-place!

"And when she looked under the rock, there *was* a great tiger lying! And she said, 'O tiger!'

"And the tiger winked with its eyes—so!

"And she said, 'I'm rather frightened of you, Mr. Tiger!'

"But the tiger said, 'Come here!'

"So she came.

"And the tiger said, 'You can just play being my cub if you like!'

"So she lay down by the tiger, and the tiger rolled her over and made believe to bite her.

"And the tiger said, 'Cubbie, would you like to sleep a little? You look rather tired.' And it made a place for her between its front legs, where she could lie down with her head on its side, and it was nice and soft.

"And the tiger said, 'If the flies trouble you, I'll just switch them away with my tail!'

"And the little girl said, 'I'll just leave my little bag of cakes open so that if you like you can help yourself while I'm asleep.'

"And she went to sleep on the tiger. And when she woke the tiger licked all over her face and said, 'Good-bye'; and she went on.

"And by and by, as she was going up a very steep road right up on the mountain, there was a lion standing right before her.

"And the little girl said, 'O Mr. Lion!'

"And he said, 'Come up to me!'

"So she came up; and he rubbed his head against her pinafore and she rubbed her head in his stiff curls.

"And the lion said, 'Aren't you afraid to come walking in the bush alone?'

"And she said, 'Oh no!'

"And he yawned.

"And she said, 'Don't you open your mouth so *very* wide, please! It's so *very* big!'

"And he said, 'I'm only yawning a little; it's nothing.'

"And the little girl gave him some of her cakes. She said, 'I've made them myself.'

"He licked his mouth and said they were nice cakes; and he said he would walk home with her. She said there was no need; because perhaps the people at the farmhouse mightn't quite like it; but that if ever he had a thorn in his foot he must just let her know and she'd take it out. He said he hadn't a thorn just then, but he'd let her know when he had. So they rubbed their heads against each other, and she went away."

(The mouth of the child under the tree was drawn in at the corners as if half smiling, a quiet smile.)

"Then the little girl went down the mountain and into her father's garden. And, just as she was going in at the gate under the dam wall, she heard something go puff—puff—puff! And she looked round, and, there, just by her, was a great puff-adder sitting up! And she said, 'O, Puff-puffie!'

"And the puff-adder said, 'Come with me, my dear!'

"And the little girl said, 'But Puff-puffie, I'm rather afraid!'

"And the puff-adder said, 'Don't be, my dear; I never bite little girls!' And she took the little girl to a hole in the wall, where all her little puff-adders were. And she said, 'You can put your hand in and take a few out. They've all got little poison bags, but they don't use them. They only eat grass and sand; and they like a little drop of milk now and then when they can get it.'

"And the little girl put her hand in and took out the little puff-adders, till her pinafore was full.

"And she said, 'I shall not forget to bring them a little drop of milk when I have any!' And she put them back in the hole, and she wished good afternoon to the puff-adder, and the puff-adder wished her good afternoon and went to sleep under a stone.

"And then the little girl went down further in the garden; and she hadn't gone very far when she saw a great cobra lying on the grass, with his bright eyes looking at her.

"And she said, 'O Mr. Cobra!'

"And he said, 'Good afternoon, my dear. Won't you take me on your lap and warm me a little? I'm so cold to-day!'

"So she held out her pinafore and the cobra climbed in: he made her pinafore quite full. And she walked to the sod wall with him and sat down on the top, where the sun could shine on him, and she sang to the cobra; and he went to sleep in her lap.—And that's the end of the story."

(The child under the tree seemed to be dropping asleep also; her lips had ceased to move, and her breath came evenly, but her mind went on.)

"You know that's only a story, my baby. You can't really go into the bush and do so with all the animals. They don't understand—yet. Perhaps, if

you could talk to them—from a long way off;—so that they knew what you meant——? My father brought a tiger down from the bush once, that they had caught with a trap. I was sorry for him because he was shut up in a cage, and looked so sad. So I saved my meat for him at dinner, and I took it out to him when the others were asleep; his eyes were quite nearly shut and his head was on his feet. But just when I put my hand in with the meat he jumped up; he tried to bite me. I didn't tell anyone.

"Only dogs understand. If a great dog comes at you, my baby, don't you run away. Just say 'Sibby! Sibby! Sibby!' and make—so—with your fingers; say 'P-o-o-r dog, *p-o-o-r*, P-o-o-r little Sibby!' Even if he's big, you can say 'little'; dogs always like to be called 'little.' Even if he's got his mouth on a side—so—, and you can, see his one tooth; don't be afraid; just stand and talk to him. He'll understand. But other things don't.—The best thing is to feed them.

"My baby, was it a nice little story I've told you? If I tell you a secret, you mustn't tell anyone else! I'm a person that makes stories! I write *books*! When I was little I used to scribble them in a copybook with a stick, when I didn't know how to write. But when I grew up I learnt to write;—I wrote real books, a whole room full! I've written a book about birds, and about animals, and about the world; and one day I'm going to write a book something like the Bible. If you like to make up stories, I shall never let anyone laugh at *you*, when you walk up and down and talk to yourself. I know you *must*.

"There are some stories I didn't make that I like too. There's one I like best of all. Shall I tell it you?"

(The child under the tree moved her arms a little as if drawing something closer to her.)

"It's rather a hard story because it's a grown-up people's story; I heard it one Sunday afternoon; my father read it to my mother. They thought I couldn't understand, but I did. I don't know if I tell it right,

because I only heard it once, but I often looked at the picture. I'll make it as easy as I can.

"You see, it's called *What Hester Durham Lived For*.—Hester Durham was a woman, and she sat by the table talking; and the minister came and talked with her. And she said, 'Oh, I wish I was dead! My husband isn't very kind to me, and my boy, whom I loved so much, is dead; and now I wish I was dead too.'

"And the Clergyman (that is a Minister) said to her, 'Oh, you mustn't say that; perhaps one day you'll have something to do for someone.'

"And so the lady went away to India;—that's a land far away where black people live—and the black soldiers (they call them Sepoys) wanted to kill them. They came all round the house, calling and yelling, with swords and sticks. They were only women and children there; and all of them were very frightened; even the old black Ayah. But Hester Durham was not afraid. In the picture they are all standing round her and some of them have caught hold of her dress, and some are lying on the ground close to her; and you can see the men's faces outside, with their eyes very big, wanting to come in and kill them all, and their mouths open, screaming! Then it says in the Book:—'*Alone, like a rock in a raging sea, Hester Durham stood there.*' They hadn't been so afraid, because she was there to comfort them. And at last the Sepoys did come in, and killed them all; but—'*to comfort those frail women and children in their last hour of despair, that was what Hester Durham lived for*'—those are the words I heard my father read. It's rather a difficult story; but you'll know what it means when you're grown up, when you are five years old—I did—though it is difficult.

"I can teach you many things, my baby; poems; there's a nice one:

'The Assyrian came down——'

" And another :

' Like mist on the mountains,  
Like ships on the sea——'

" But the nicest of all is about a woman. The Romans came and they took away her country and they beat her till the blood ran off her back on to the ground, and they were cruel to her daughters. The Romans were people who took other people's countries; and she got into a chariot and her two daughters and her long hair flying in the wind; and under the tree sat an old man with a long white beard;—and he said—

' Rome shall perish; write that word  
In the blood that she hath spilt——' "

(The child under the pear tree with her eyes still fast closed raised her right hand, and her lips moved, making a low sound.)

' Rome, for Empire far renown  
Tramps on a thousand States;  
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground :  
Hark !—The Gaul is at her gates ! '

(The child under the tree lifted her hand higher and waved it dramatically with her eyes still closed.)

" And the Gauls did come; and they knocked at the gates, and they burnt it down. ' Hark !—The Gaul is at her gates ! '—I'm glad they burnt it, aren't you ? "

(The child's hand dropped.)

" It's a long poem. I'll teach it you. I could understand it all, except ' For-Empire ' and ' far-renown. '—I don't know what ' far-renown ' is—or ' for-empire—' "

(The child under the tree knit her forehead a little.)

" Grown-up people's things are nicer than children's. I didn't like *Jane Taylor's Hymns for Infant Minds*. You'll never have to learn them. The Bible is nice, especially about Elijah, and some texts; one beautiful one;—' And instead of the thorn tree shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.' It's just like water going—so—!! But



Miss Plumtree's Bible stories are horrid! My mother used to read them to me."

(The child under the tree turned her head a little to one side and bent it, as though bringing it nearer to something that lay on her arm.)

"My baby, do you know who Charles is?—He's the boy who always plays with me. You won't mind if I love him more than you, because I've known him so very long. He always tells me stories, and I tell him stories, and we walk up and down together. He's a little older than me. He's not a *real* boy, you know! I made him up. He is the Prince Consort of South Africa, and I am the Queen.

"I don't like *real* boys. We had two came to visit us once: they were my cousins. Frank was the biggest. Before they came I meant to play with them and show them all my things; but afterwards I didn't: I wouldn't even show them my flat stone. Frank laughed at me and called me Goody-no-shoes. Well, I didn't mind that so much, it's not so bad as to be called a 'Tom-boy,' or 'a strange child!'—but he was so unkind to the cat! He held her up by her tail. I don't like cats, they eat birds; but you can't do *that* to them! He used to come after me when I wanted to be alone, and say, 'Ha, ha, Miss! I've found you!' and he said I'd have to marry him when I grew up,—but I said I never would."

She paused for a long while.

"I liked him better than John-Ferdinand—that was his brother. One day John-Ferdinand saw the little Kaffir maid break the churn stick, and he went and told old Ayah; and old Ayah beat her. Frank and I saw it too, but we didn't say anything. Frank said I ought to say to him—

'You tell tale tit,  
Your tongue shall be slit,  
And every dog in the town  
Shall have a little bit!'

"It wasn't such a very nice little poem; my mother

said I mustn't say it up. I just tell you what Frank said. He knew many other little poems—

‘ Four and twenty tailors  
Went to catch a snail——’

and

‘ Boobee—Boobee ! Black-face ! ’

“ They are not such very nice poems ; but rather funny ; and you can say them up if you like, I won't mind. He could make wagons—but I was glad when they went away. I don't like live boys : they are something like Kaffirs. Jan married Mietje, our Kaffir maid, and he used to beat her—I'm glad I'm not a Kaffir man's wife.

“ My baby, I'm so glad you are a little girl. I'll make you a pair of thick trousers to climb trees in ; these white ones tear so when you slide down, and then the people call you ‘ Tom-boy ! ’

“ Now put your arms tight round mother's neck, and hold mother tight.”

(The child under the tree turned yet slightly more on to her side, and moved her left arm as though she were drawing something nearer to her.)

“ Mother will tell you just one little story before you go to sleep, a very easy one.

“ Once there was a little blue egg in a nest, and the mother bird sat on it. And one day out came a bird ; it had no feathers and its eyes were shut, and the mother bird sat on it. By and by the feathers began to come and the eyes opened. And one night, when the mother bird was fast asleep in the nest and the little bird was under her, it put out its head from under the mother's wing and looked. And what do you think it saw ?—It saw all the stars shining !—And it sat up and looked at them !

“ That's the end of the story.” She paused for a while.

(The child under the tree knit her brows a little, and her hand moved softly up and down on her bosom.)

"My baby, I'm so sorry I have to give you food out of a bottle—Kaffir women have milk for their babies—and cows and sheep too—but I am like the birds."

(She moved her hand over her little flat breast.)

"I'm so sorry. Now go to sleep, my baby. Put your arms round mother's neck. You must always try to be a good little girl: I always did when I was little—at least—I didn't always—but you must, please. Now go to sleep. Mother will sing you a little song."

(The child under the tree made a queer piping little sound in her throat, and half-formed words came from her lips.)

'London's burning!  
London's burning!  
Fire! Fire!  
Bring some water! Bring some water!  
London's burning!  
London's burning!'

(The song died away, and the child under the tree lay quite motionless; but her dream still went on.)

She thought when the baby had gone to sleep, that she got softly off the bed and went out. The evening air was blowing over the island, and it was near sunset. She went to the side of the house where the building materials lay. She was going to build a playroom for the baby. She rolled up her sleeves and dug a foundation and filled it with stones. (She had seen the workmen build the wagon house.) Then she mixed mud, and took off her shoes and socks, and danced in it. (She had seen the Kaffirs treading the mud to build the wagon house, but she had never been allowed to help.) Then she began to build. She took the bricks in one hand and the trowel in the other; she threw the bricks round in one hand and cut off the rough points with the trowel, as the workmen did. Then she placed each brick carefully on the layer of mortar, and tapped them with the end of the handle of the trowel to see if they were quite straight.

When the little wall was two layers high, she looked

round. The sun was setting on the island, and over the trees a strange soft evening light shone. There was a pink glow in the sky, and it reflected itself on everything. She stood perfectly still, holding the trowel in her hand, and looked at it. The swans were swimming up and down in the quiet water, far away, with their necks bent. They left a long snow-white mark in the water, like the swans in the picture.

'The swan swam in a silvery lake.  
Well swam the swan!'

A spasm of delight thrilled up the spine of the child under the pear tree. When a full-grown woman, long years afterwards she could always recall that island, the little house, the bricks, the wonderful light over earth and sky and the swans swimming on the still water.

After a time she half opened her eyes and looked up. Above her was the pear tree, with its stiff branches of dull green leaves. Slowly she raised herself into a sitting posture, and looked round.

All about lay the parched yellow grass, and the little dried peach trees, with their shrivelled leaves and drooping yellow peaches. Everything was brown and dry: she stretched herself and yawned.

Then she stood up. Suddenly she saw a herd of little pigs a short way off, feeding under the peach trees. They had got in through a hole in the wall and were eating the fallen fruit among the grass. They would soon make their way up to the flower garden.

With a shout and whoop she rushed off after them, waving her kappie at them by one string. The little pigs squeaked and grunted and scattered in all directions. She chased them till she had got them in a herd all together, and drove them out through one of the gaps in the sod wall. Then she stood on the wall and shouted frantically after them, still waving her kappie, though they were all running as fast as they could, with their little curled-up tails. She stood on the wall and waved till they disappeared behind the kraals.

The severest heat of the afternoon was now past, and there was a certain mellow haziness beginning to creep into the afternoon air. She shaded her eyes with her hand and looked away over the flat below the homestead, where the thorn trees grew. There seemed a kind of soft, yellow, transparent veil over it all; and there were little gnats in the air. Presently, as she stood dreamily gazing, she saw some figures moving far away in the flat below the house, near the great dam with the willow trees. The foremost figure carried something on its shoulder; it looked like Long Jan the Kaffir: then came her father, and then two Kaffir boys with something over their shoulders that looked like spades. She could not see well; they were so far away and the soft yellow haze made things dreamy. They passed through the new lands; and then they went out of sight, behind the great willow trees which grew round the dam.

She stood still, looking out at them very drowsily, thinking of nothing in particular, and hardly noting them.

Suddenly a small shrill voice called from the back steps of the house, "Get down from that wall, child, will you! Standing there with nothing on your head! You'll be burnt as black as a Kaffir before your mother gets up. Put your kappie on!"

It was old Ayah, who had come to the back door to throw water into the pigs' wash.

Rebekah climbed from the wall on the garden side, and walked away; but she did not put her kappie on: she tied it round her waist by its long strings, and walked back to the pear tree. Everything seemed a little bald and empty; she had no wish to make more stories, and there was nothing to do. It seemed to her, all at once, that it was a very long afternoon. Then there came back to her the picture of her mother lying in the bed with the baby's head on her arm, which she had been trying to put from her all day. She saw the embroidered wrist of her mother's nightdress; and she

saw her mother drawing up the cover to shield the baby's head. She tried to think of something else.

There was a strange little blind footpath among the grass under the pear tree on the left side. It was a few feet long, trodden hard, and flat, and led to nothing. She had made it by walking up and down there when she and Charles made stories and talked.

She began to walk up and down in it now, rather dragging her feet. By and by she and Charles began to talk; she talked in a quite audible voice, now for Charles, and then for herself. They told each other no stories, but they began to discuss a little about the house of stramonium stalks they were going to build; he said what he thought was the best way of-making the roof would be with stramonium branches, she said she thought peach branches would be stronger and better. But neither had much of interest to say that afternoon.

It began to get cooler now. The large white butterflies that had sat with folded wings during the great heat, were beginning to hover over the brown grass; and there was a faint movement in the air, which showed that the evening cool was going to begin.

Then, as she walked, her eye caught sight of a white ball sticking on the bark of the pear tree. She walked round to the stem to look at it, and broke a bit of dry bark off to get it out. It was a soft fluffy ball. She put it on the ground, and opened it carefully with two sticks, bending over it, her knees drawn up almost to her chest, and all her little white knickerbockers showing. Inside of it were little grey things that looked like tiny spiders' eggs. She examined it carefully and long, sticking her under lip out over the upper. It was very curious. She was going to examine it more closely, when she caught sight of a row of black ants walking across her own footpath, like a file of little soldiers, one after the other; each one had a pink egg in its mandibles. A few inches farther was another line of little black ants returning across the footpath,

probably to fetch more of the eggs which were in some nest hidden in the grass. She wheeled round, still on her heels, with a hand on each knee to balance herself, and watched them closely. Presently a huge ant, like those running up and down the stem of the pear tree, dashed into the path from the grass and seized one of the tiny ants that were carrying the eggs. The ant dropped the egg. The large ant held it exactly in the middle with its large nippers. In an instant she started up, drew her lips tighter, and seized a stick of straw, and tried to divide them; but the large one held so tightly she found she would crush both. She took two withered leaves and softly tried to separate them. The large one caught the leaf with its nippers and the small one got free; it ran away to look for its dropped egg. The large one was clinging angrily to the leaf, and trying to bite it. She bent intently over it, watching it.

Suddenly she looked up. She had a curious feeling that someone was looking at her! She looked round and up into the pear tree, still balancing herself carefully in her half-sitting position; there was nothing there but the green dried leaves, and all about nothing but the long brown grass, in some places partly trodden down, in others still standing upright.

She looked back at the ants. Then she glanced round again inquiringly. Two feet from the round spot in the grass which she had trodden down to lie in, was the head of a large yellow cobra. Most of its body was hidden in the grass; but its head was out: and it was watching her. It was the colour of the grass, pale yellow with brown marks. Had it been there all the afternoon? She stood softly upright and stared at it. It looked at her with its glittering unblinking eyes. Then it began to move. Krinkle! krinkle! krinkle! It drew its long body out over the grass, with a sound like a lady walking in a stiff starched print dress. She gazed at it in fixed horror, motionless.

She was not afraid of snakes. When she was three years old she had carried one home in her pinafore, as a

great treasure, and been punished for doing so. Since she understood what they were, she was not afraid of them, but they had become a nightmare to her. They spoiled her world. Krinkle, krinkle, krinkle!—it moved away over the grass towards a hole in the sod wall, winding its long six feet of body after it.

She seized her book and ran up the path through the orchard. According to rule, she should have gone to the house and called people to look for it and kill it. But she ran quickly through the flower garden and up the steps on to the front stoep; then she stood still. Her heart was beating so she could hear it; she had a sense of an abandoned wickedness somewhere: it was almost as if *she herself* were a snake, and had gone krinkle! krinkle! krinkle! over the grass. She had a sense of all the world being abandonedly wicked; and a pain in her left side. When her heart had stopped throbbing quite so loud, she opened the door slowly and went into the large front room.

No one had remembered to open the shutters that afternoon though it was almost sunset, it was dusky in the room even with the door open. On the wall hung two great framed pictures of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, in regal dress. She always played the Queen was herself, and the Prince, Charles; and once, when no one was about, she had put a chair on the side table and climbed up on to it, and kissed her own hand, and put it high up where she could touch Charles' face with it.

But to-night she did not look at them. The chair in which her mother always sat stood empty beside the little work-table, and the footstool before it was covered with dust. She opened the drawer of the table and took out a calico duster and carefully dusted the chair and stool. When she had put the duster back, she opened another drawer and took out a spelling-book. She drew her own little square wooden footstool between her mother's chair and the open door and sat down on it, with her spelling-book in her hand. She



began to learn a short column of spelling which she should have learnt in the morning. She held up the book before her so that the light from the door might fall on the page, and spelt out—

“T-h-e-i-r—their.”

She repeated it a few score of times; then she went on to—

“T-h-o-s-e—those.”

—and then turned to her multiplication table. It was printed on the cover of the book. She was learning six-times. She repeated slowly over and over to herself—

“Six times six is—thirty-six,

And six times six is—thirty-six.”

The soft, fading evening light was creeping over the orange trees outside the door.

She drawled slower—

“And, six times six is—thirty-six,

And, six times six is—thirty-six,

And, six times six is—thirty-six,

And, six times six—is—thirty-seven,

And, six times six—is—thirty-seven.”

She repeated it slowly about a hundred times, sometimes right, and sometimes wrong, looking out dreamily all the while over the book, through the open door, her mind almost a complete blank; then she paused. In a moment, something had flashed on her! She knew now what those figures had meant which she had seen walking down in the flat in the afternoon when she stood on the sod wall. She knew now what it was Long Jan was carrying; she knew why her father walked behind him, and the two Kaffir boys had spades over their shoulders. In an instant, she knew well, and with an absolute certainty, that if she went down to the great dam behind the willow trees beyond the new lands, she would find there a little mound of earth, and that the baby from the spare room would be under it. All day she had not let herself think of that baby since old Ayah had driven her out of the

room. She knew, also, something else; she knew at that moment—vaguely, but quite certainly—something of what birth and death mean, which she had not known before. She would never again look for a new little baby, or expect to find it anywhere; vaguely but quite certainly something of its genesis had flashed on her.

She stood up in the quickly darkening room; put her multiplication book back into the drawer, and walked straight to the door that opened into the dining-room, and closed it behind her.

In the dining-room also it was getting dark now, though it looked towards the west and the window was open, and here also it was very quiet. This was generally the noisy time of the day, when there was a stir and a bustle everywhere: her mother was generally giving out rations, and the herds and maids who had come from the huts to fetch their food stood about the storehouse door outside laughing and talking. The Kaffir maids who worked in the house were generally chatting loudly in the kitchen; and the little Kaffirs, who might not approach at any other time, often stood about the kitchen steps waiting for their mothers; and from the milking kraal you could hear the men shouting to the cows and calves, and calling to one another; and the dogs felt the excitement and barked; and above everything could always be heard old Ayah's voice, in a shrill, small key, giving orders everywhere, which no one ever obeyed. But to-night it was all quiet: you could only hear the lowing of the cows and the bleating of the sheep. The men hardly shouted. The rations had been given out early in the morning, and the little Kaffirs had been told not to come about the back door.

Through the great square window the twilight was beginning to come in. She would not go to her mother's room, and she had nowhere else to go. She sat down on a deal bench without a back, that stood against the wall. No one came to light the candles;

and you could see the dim outlines of the tall clock in the corner, and the wooden chairs and tables standing out as shadows from the whitewashed walls. Presently, as it grew quite darker, a bat came in at the window and flapped about from side to side and went out again. Then the room grew pitch dark. Rebekah drew her legs up under her on to the form, and leaned her head back against the whitewashed wall.

By and by the two Kaffir maids came in from the milk house, each carrying a bucket of milk. They had a lighted candle. They went through the dining-room into the pantry; they were laughing and talking softly; the light from the open pantry door came back into the dining-room.

Presently old Ayah came in from the mother's bedroom.

"What are you sitting here all alone in the dark for, child?" she said.

She went into the pantry, and came out with a large basin of bread-and-milk sop, and a little pannikin of pure milk. She set them down on the side of the table next to the bench with a tallow candle beside them, in a low candlestick.

"Why didn't you eat your dinner, little white face?"

Rebekah sat upright; old Ayah pushed the table a little nearer to her, and she began to eat. She had not known before that she was hungry. Now she ate ravenously and drank at the milk out of her pannikin.

Old Ayah went back into the pantry and scolded the maids in Dutch because the wooden milk-pail was leaking. Very soon the maids and old Ayah came back to the dining-room, and rested the pail on the end of the dining table to examine what was gone wrong. One of the maids held the lighted candle, while the other was chewing tallow to put in the cracks.

"What's the baby like, old Ayah?" asked the maid holding the light, as old Ayah examined the leak.

"A fine child," said old Ayah, without looking up.

"She'd make four of *that* child when she was born. Its hands are nearly as large as hers now."

The maid who was chewing the tallow pressed some down on the open seam.

"Where has *she* been all day?" she asked, nicking her head at Rebekah.

"Oh, God knows!" said old Ayah; "I've hardly seen her. You might as well try to keep your eye on a mier-kat among its holes as on *that* child."

They talked of her to her face as if she were a stone wall.

Rebekah kept on eating her supper, gazing straight into her basin, and taking large mouthfuls.

"Look at her now!" said the first Kaffir maid. "How she eats! She's trying to swallow the spoon!"

"Sy's 'n snaaks se kind!" said old Ayah. ("She's a strange child!")

Rebekah kept on eating steadily and looking into the basin. It hurt her so that they talked of her.

When they had done stopping the hand-pail, the two maids went to the kitchen, and old Ayah went back to the mother's room. Immediately they were gone Rebekah pushed her basin with what was left in it from her; and leaned back on the bench. She drew up one leg, leaned her elbow on the bench and rested her head against the whitewashed wall. She was very tired. She watched the tallow candle fixedly; it was burning up red, and flickering a little, as the moths and night flies that came in through the open window fluttered round it. It seemed so long since she had got up in the morning. It was her bedtime, but no one came to tell her to go to bed.

Then she began to watch the wick of the tallow candle more fixedly as it burnt larger and redder. She pressed two of her fingers on her eyes, half closing them; then she saw two candles; she took them away, and there was only one. She wondered how that was, and tried it again. When she moved one finger a little, the one light went up slowly and stood over the

other; she moved the other finger and they came so close, they were almost one. She took her hand away and looked at the candle, half-closing her eyes; she did not see two candles now, but only four long rays of red light, the two higher ones darker and the two lower lighter. She was slowly getting very interested in it.

She held up her hand and let the light shine through her fingers; the hand made a long dark shadow on the wall to the left of the room. Why was the shadow so much longer than the hand, she wondered, and why did it fall just where it did? She moved her hand and watched the shadow move. If only one were grown up, one would know all about these things! She dropped her hand on her side. Perhaps even grown-up people didn't know all.—Perhaps only God knew what lights and shadows were!

She lay still watching the candle. The wick had burnt so long it was beginning to droop and turn over a little on one side. The next morning she would get up early before anyone was up, and begin learning her multiplication table and spelling: perhaps she would know it before evening. She would not play once the whole day, or make up stories. She would learn the whole day. It would all help to make you grow up quickly, and know everything!

It was half-past eight now. Her eyelids began to droop; she only kept them open with a strong effort: she could not bear to go to sleep; but her head bowed, nodding even though she leaned it against the wall.

Suddenly she sat bolt upright; her eyes opened widely. They seemed to grow larger and larger at each instant. She listened intently. From her mother's bedroom there came a sound, a loud, wailing cry. Rebekah got off the bench and stood rigid and upright. Her small sharp-cut face, pale before, became now a deadly white. There was silence for a moment; then another cry, then another, and another, each louder and longer than before. Her hands doubled into fists;

she turned a bright pink. The crying went on. She raised her chin; her throat swelled till it looked like the full throat of a tiny woman; the veins stood out like little whipcords. She drew in the corners of her mouth. Again there was a cry, but this time, fainter. A dark purple flush came up over her forehead; her eyelids drooped. She rushed out at the door, striking herself against it. She flew up the dark passage to the door of her mother's room. She tried to reach the handle, but it was too high. With hands and feet she struck the panels of the door till they rebounded.

"Let me in! Let me in! I say, let me in! I will—I will—I say—I will come in!"

The baby inside had left off crying.

Rebekah heard nothing but the surging of the blood in her own ears. Old Ayah opened the door.

"Let me in! Let me in!—I will come in!"

Old Ayah tried to put her back with her hand.

"Leave me alone!—Leave me alone!" she cried. "You are killing it like the other one! Leave me alone, I say! Leave me alone!"

Old Ayah tried to hold her fast, but she caught the Hottentot woman's skirts and twisted them round with her arms and legs.

The little mother from the bed asked in a sleepy voice what was the matter.

"Don't ask me what is the matter!" cried old Ayah indignantly, in Cape Dutch. "Ask the Father of all Evil! This child is mad!"

She wrenched her skirts free from Rebekah's grasp, and thrust her into the room. Rebekah stood on the ox skin in the centre of the floor, vibrating from the soles of her feet to her head.

The candle was on a stand beside her mother's bed, and threw its light full on her, as she lay with the baby's head on her arm, and her hand with the white frill thrown across it. On the right side of the great four-poster bed they had pinned up a red cotton quilt, with great lions and palm-trees printed on it, to keep off

the draught from the open window; and the quilt reflected a soft red light over the mother and child. In the far right-hand corner of the room was Rebekah's own little cot, where she had slept ever since she was born.

"God only does know what possesses this child!" said old Ayah, fixing her twinkling black eyes on Rebekah and talking at her. "If she were my child, I wouldn't let her come into the house at all, where respectable people live who like to be indoors. I'd just tie her fast with a chain to a monkey post outside, and let her go round and round there. Then she could eat Kaffir beans like a baboon, and climb, and scream as much as she liked!"

"What did you make such a noise for, Rebekah?" the little mother said gently. "Did you think they were hurting the baby?"

Rebekah said nothing; the blood was leaving her head and running into her heart, and she felt faint.

"Twisting a person's clothes almost off their backs! Can't one even wash and dress a child without this little wild thing coming howling, and dancing round one!" Old Ayah smoothed out her crumpled skirt.

"Do you want to see the baby, Rebekah?" asked her mother.

Rebekah walked unsteadily to the foot of the bed and stood beside the great wooden bedpost.

Old Ayah took up the baby's bath and walked out of the room with it, muttering that some children ought to live with the baboons.

"If you would like to come and see the baby, you can climb up," said her mother drowsily, with half-closed eyes.

Rebekah waited a moment, then she clambered softly up on to the bed, and sat down at the foot, half kneeling, with her back against the post. Her mother, who was very tired, had re-closed her eyes. The baby's red face pressed against the mother's white breast. The light shone on them both.

Rebekah drew up her knees and clasped her arms round them, and sat watching.

"It's drinking, isn't it, eh, mother?" she said at last, very softly.

"Yes," said her mother, without opening her eyes.

"It's *your* little baby, eh, mother?" she whispered again softly, after a long pause.

Her mother nodded dreamily.

Rebekah stroked her little skirts down over her knees.

"It *must* drink!" she said after a time. "It *must* have milk, eh, mother?—It's your little baby, eh, mother?"—she added after a long pause.

But the little mother made no answer; she had dropped away into sleep.

Rebekah sat watching them.

By and by the baby moved its hand, which struck out from the white-flannel wrapper about it: it opened its fingers slowly; it stretched them out one after the other and closed them up again into a fist. Rebekah watched it intently.

Presently she leaned forward, resting one elbow on the bed, and slowly stretched out her other hand, and with one forefinger touched the hand of the baby. Her mouth quivered; she sat up quickly, and watched them again. She leaned her head back against the post at the foot of the bed and sat gazing at them, her eyes never moving.

At half-past nine old Ayah came in again bringing in the hot-water bottle and an etna to warm the gruel during the night.

"My fatherland's force!<sup>1</sup> You not in bed yet! Are you going to sit up till morning?"

The mother woke up. "Have you been sitting here all this while, Rebekah?" she asked gently.

[<sup>1</sup> "My fatherland's force!"—So Olive wrote it. But the expression is Afrikaans ("Dutch") and should be *My Vaderland se vas* (pronounced almost "May vahderlahnd ser fos"), probably a corruption of an old Nederlands expression, meaning My fatherland's God.]



Old Ayah put the warm water bottle at the mother's feet.

"She'd never go to bed if she could help it!" old Ayah muttered. "It's my belief, if you came in at three o'clock in the morning, you'd find her sitting up in her bed, talking to the spiders in the dark. She'd talk to the stars if she hadn't anything else to talk to, just not to go to sleep like other children!"

"Mother," said Rebekah in a very slow, clear voice, stroking down her knees; "Mother,—will you let me have *your* baby to sleep by me for a little while?"

She spoke each word slowly and distinctly, as one who repeats what they have carefully prepared.

"No, dear," said the mother; "it's too small; you can't have it to sleep with you yet."

"Have it to sleep with you!" said old Ayah. "I should think not! Why, you'd kill it!"

"I should take great care of it," said Rebekah, very slowly, still stroking her knees, her eyes very wide open and fixed steadily on her mother; "I wouldn't lie on it, nor let it fall. I only want to take care of it, and teach it."

"Teach it! Teach it, indeed!" said old Ayah, tucking in the mother's feet. "You just want to teach her to be a naughty Tom-boy like you. We'll take care she doesn't play with you, and learn all your wild ways."

Rebekah stroked her knees more heavily. "I didn't mean to teach her anything wrong," she said slowly;—"I wasn't even going to teach her to hate *you*."

"Hate me!—Rather!—I should think not! What next! Why should you teach her to hate me?"

Rebekah turned her eyes on to old Ayah and gazed at her. "Because *I* hate you so!" she said.

"Don't quarrel with her any more, Ayah," said the mother; "the child really doesn't know what she is talking about; she's half-asleep already.—Come, get off the bed, Rebekah, and go and undress.—You can't have the baby."

But Rebekah sat motionless. Slowly the tears

gathered under her eyelids. She closed them, and the tears lay in large heavy drops under the lashes without falling.

She raised her face with its closed eyes to the canopy of the bed.

"Oh, I can't bear it!—I can't bear it!" she said slowly. "What shall I do?—What shall I do?—Oh, what shall I do?" She moved her upturned face with its closed eyes slowly from side to side.—"I meant to love it so! Oh, I meant—All my things—my Peter book—all my stones.—Oh, if you will let me love it!" The bed shook, but no tears fell from the closed eyes. She stroked her knees with both hands. "It's not any use!—you see—it's not any use!—I have tried!—I have tried!—Oh, I wish I was dead—I wish I was dead—I wish I was dead!"

Even old Ayah looked at her in silence.

"The child is really three-parts asleep," said the mother. "It's been a long trying day for her, running about with no one to look after her. She is but a baby, though she is so old-fashioned. Get off the bed, Rebekah, and old Ayah will undress you."

But Rebekah felt her way to the foot of the bed and slid down:

"I can undress myself," she heaved.

She stood on the floor in the middle of the room with her eyes still closed, the lids swollen and fastened together, and unbuttoned her things one by one, letting them drop on the floor, until she stood there in her little white shift; her small naked shoulders still vibrating. Old Ayah brought her her nightdress.

"Dis 'n snaaks se kind!" she muttered. (" 'Tis a strange child!")

Rebekah slipped it over her own head, and then, with her hand stretched out, she felt her way to the bed in the corner. She climbed up over the side of the cot and lay down. The long vibrating movement still went on; it was almost as if a man were crying.

"I can't have that," said the little mother; "she'll

go on with it half the night in her sleep. I know the child. I think she dreams of things. Take the baby and lay it by her just for a little while. It's been a long day, and she's very tired."

Old Ayah shook her head forebodingly; but she took up the baby, wrapped it in its shawl, and carried it across the room. She turned back the cover and made a place for it beside Rebekah. The child stretched out her arm for its head; the Hottentot woman laid it down on it, and drew the cover up over both. Then she turned and went out, to fetch the gruel and the night-light.

The elder sister slipped her hand under the shawl till she found the baby's hand; she clasped her fingers softly into its tiny fingers, and held them. With the other hand she tried to draw its body up close against her.

Presently there was a queer quavering little sound, as though some one were trying to sing; but nothing came of it; then all was quiet.

When old Ayah came back in fifteen minutes every one in the room was quiet and asleep.

She put the gruel and night-light down on the drawers, and came to the bedside to remove the baby. But when she turned down the cover she found the hands of the sisters so interlocked, and the arm of the elder sister so closely round the younger, that she could not remove it without awaking both.

Old Ayah shook her head, and drew the cover up softly. She blew out the candle, and put the night-light down on the floor beyond the bed, and walked softly towards the door of the room, with her naked yellow feet, her figure casting a long dark shadow on the wall. When she got to the door as she passed out she turned and looked back. Along the floor the night-light shone, casting deep shadows into far corners, especially that in which the two children lay!

But they were all sleeping well.

(END OF PRELUDE.)

THE BOOK  
THE WOMAN'S DAY



## CHAPTER I

### SHOWING WHAT BABY-BERTIE THOUGHT OF HER NEW TUTOR; AND HOW REBEKAH GOT MARRIED

TUCKED away among the ribs of a mountain in the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope is a quiet, tree-covered farm. The owner of this farm twenty-five years ago was an Englishman, a gentleman in a rough and unveneered fashion; a man fond of his books, of his trees, of his land; little given to speaking, much given to thinking, and seldom going farther than his own beacons. In truth, there was little to tempt anyone farther; the neighbours were unlettered, velskoen-wearing Dutchmen, or equally unlettered English settlers, and they did not often trouble their neighbours with a visit—a fact which no one regretted except the little mother, who was of a lively and sociable turn, and who rejoiced greatly over even the arrival of an old Boer Tante. It was a quiet, monotonous life; the farmer himself, the little mother, their children, with a score of Hottentot and Kaffir servants, completed the catalogue of the farm's inhabitants: the human inhabitants, for of wild animal life there was no want. In the bush that covered the mountain sides were leopards, who came down at night and carried off lambs from the kraals; in the tall trees in the bush were little grey, long-tailed monkeys, and wood-doves, and cock-o-veets, who cried and called all day; in the rocks that crowned the mountain troops of baboons climbed and fought; and down in the valley among the thorn-

trees<sup>1</sup> were mier-kats and great tortoises, and hares who paid visits to the lands. Almost all day from the open windows of the house you might see at intervals the sheep among the long grass on the mountain side or down in the flat; or catch sight of, far off, moving specks, which were the goats moving in and out among the thorn trees. All day long the great glass doors and windows stood open; through them came the scent of orange blossoms from the orangery before the door, and from the garden beyond where the hollyhocks and dahlias and marigolds and four-o'clocks made a bed of colour. In spring time there was the sweet scent of the blossoms from the long orchard beyond the flower garden; and in the summer, at Christmas time, the flat was a sea of gold with the yellow flowers of the thorn trees, and the honey scent came up to the house; and in autumn there was the faint, acid smell from the falling figs and peaches which lay on the ground in the brown trampled grass, and which the little Kaffirs and pigs came over the gaps in the wall to revel among.

Over the nek came the road from the town. It wound in and out, in and out, a line of white among the thorn trees. It disappeared altogether on the flat, till it came out near the mielie lands, and by the great dam with the willow trees. In that dam on hot summer nights the frogs loved to croak. Baby-Bertie, the farmer's youngest daughter, said she loved to hear them as she lay in her bed at night; but Rebekah, her elder sister, said it was a sad sound and made one think of when one was a child, long ago. But Bertie, Baby-Bertie, as they called her, was only fifteen and two months, and she had not a very long, long ago to think of. Rebekah, her sister, was twenty, and had once been on a visit to Cape Town, and knew a great deal,

<sup>1</sup> The mimosa, generally called thorn tree in South Africa; a tree with a delicate acacia leaf and long white thorns from an inch to three inches in length, and with a sweet-scented yellow honey blossom.

and had read a great deal, and that might make it seem a long time since she was a child; but to Bertie, it was only yesterday, though she could already touch the oranges no other woman on the farm could reach, and her chin was higher than her father's shoulder. So, to her, the croaking of the frogs at night was as pleasant as the lowing of the cows when they came down the mountain side in the evening.

On one afternoon Baby-Bertie stood at the window of the spare room, putting dahlias and lilies into a slender green glass; Rebekah, her sister, knelt in the room behind her, pinning a white valance round the bed. Outside, all the flat was full of yellow blossoms, for the thorn trees were in flower. Once or twice Bertie put her head far out of the window, and looked across the flat, and drew it back again.

She was a velvety creature, with long eyelashes turned back till they almost touched her straight eyebrows. Her forehead was low and very broad, the hair hanging over it in brown curls, up each one of which you might have slipped a finger, but what one looked at most were the large round brown eyes and the velvety cheeks. Rebekah, her sister, was a small woman, with dark, fine hair, wavy, and parted down the middle; she had a very white face, except when she flushed, and then it seemed as if the blood might burn through the skin. You could always see the veins in her temples. When she was a child she used to run behind the bed and kneel down and repeat Bonar's hymn:

'Calm me, my God, and keep me calm!  
Let Thine outstretched wind  
Be as the shade of Elim's palm——'

because her heart beat so fast sometimes she thought it was going to burst. Now she seldom needed to pray that; she was always busy with her books and her microscope and collections of insects, and stones, when she was not busy working in the kitchen or milk-room, or helping her father with his farming.



And now she was to be married the next day to her cousin Frank, who had come from Cape Town to fetch her. He was tall and large, and fair, and full, with blue eyes and a light moustache; he smoked cigars and wore very spotless shirts and collars, whether they were white or striped and coloured.

He had always wanted to have her for his wife since a boy of eleven he came with his parents from England to visit their relations in South Africa. He had gone back to England, but ten years later he had come out again and settled in Cape Town to manage a branch of his father's business, and he had visited the farm once a year for four years, and had always asked Rebekah to marry him when he came, but she had always said she could not. Now everyone was surprised: she had suddenly written to him that she would; and she was to be married the next day; and the wedding breakfast was already laid out in the back dining-room, with a white cloth pinned over it to keep the dust off. She was to be married in a lilac silk in the large front room; and her father and mother and Bertie and the servants would be there, and Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort would look down from the picture-frames upon the wall.

Rebekah had wished there should be no feast and to be married in her little blue gardening dress, but her mother and Bertie said a wedding was no wedding without these things; and even the bridegroom laughed at the idea.

The magistrate was coming from the town to marry them; because Rebekah wanted no Church service. Frank was willing; he said it did not matter in the country, where no one knew what you did, though he would not have liked it done in the town where everyone would have noticed it.

He was the only man who had ever asked Rebekah to marry him, except his brother, John-Ferdinand, whom she had met when she went to Cape Town two years before, and who had asked her, but she had

refused him. Except for that visit to Cape Town and a visit to the seaside once with her mother when she was a child, she had never left the farm, except to drive into the next up-country village for the day's shopping. There the shop clerks and young business men seemed people so far out of her world that she hardly knew who they were. Once the young bank clerk invited himself out to the farm and spent a day and night there, but she only spoke to him when she poured out the tea to know if he would have more, and spent the afternoon by herself in the kloof. His account of his visit did not encourage other young men to come; and only the little mother suspected what he had been there for. Rebekah had never been to a ball or a theatre or paid a formal call, and her world was a very little world except in the direction of books.

Now she and Bertie were getting the spare room ready, because Bertie's tutor was coming, who was to teach her when Rebekah was gone. Bertie herself had no greater appetite for books and learning than her hand-lamb for carrots, which it ate, as it were under compulsion, if you offered them to him, for fear of paining you, but under no other conditions whatever. But Rebekah and her father both said she ought to learn more.

This tutor was a delicate young man from England, who had advertised for a situation on a farm where he might, in return for teaching three hours a day, receive his board.

No one had seen him, but he had good credentials, and Rebekah said men were generally better teachers than women; and everyone followed Rebekah's advice on the farm.

Bertie put her head out of the window again; but there was nothing to be seen except the flat, shimmering in the afternoon sunshine, and the white road over the nek.

"Perhaps Jan has got drunk and turned the cart over; or perhaps it has broken down," she said, straining her head farther.

"It is not four yet," her sister said.

Bertie drew her head in and took the glass with the dahlias and white lilies to the mantelpiece. She stood looking at them.

"Do you think he will like them, Rebekah?"

At this moment three little Kaffirs whom Bertie had set to watch on the top step of the loft ladder set up a series of frantic yells. Bertie put down the loose flowers she had just begun to collect and rushed from the room. Rebekah pinned on. She never seemed very much excited now, even when she found a new germ under her microscope, or when one of her grafts budded, or a new book came from town; and those were the things she seemed to care for most. Soon after Bertie put her face in at the door again.

"Rebekah, do come and see him! He's just come! He is so lovely and small! He's hardly a bit bigger than you!—I thought I should be afraid of him, but I'm not a bit!—He's smaller than I am—He keeps on smiling—he's got coal-black hair—he's got a little curl, just like a drake's tail right above his ear! Do come and see him!"

Rebekah was pinning the last fold.

"Oh, come, Rebekah! He's shaking hands with father and mother and coming up the steps already!" She rushed out again.

Rebekah rose from her knees slowly, and then stooped to gather the flowers Bertie had thrown away in her haste; she looked round once to see that the room was all in readiness. Then she went into the front room. A little man was sitting at the end of the sofa, who certainly looked not more than twenty-five years old, though he had given his age as thirty-five in his credentials. He was sitting with his hands between his knees; but he smiled, and rose as she came in, with his face slightly turned down. His forehead was rounded and protruding, and had a gleam upon it as though oiled; his nose was small, and was rounded except at the point, where it seemed to have been sliced off, leaving

a small square tip. Rebekah shook hands with him; but his restless, beadlike small eyes looked away at the piano. When she had gone out, he sat down again and talked to the little mother, who sat at her work-table, while Bertie, too excited, or not venturing to come in, peeped through the dining-room door as she passed.

That afternoon they had their tea at four o'clock in the little front workroom, because the wedding breakfast was laid out in the dining-room. The room opened with a large window on to the front stoep. All the family collected there except Frank, Rebekah's cousin, who lay out under the orange-trees before the door on his back on a reed mat, smoking, and whose tea had been carried out to him by Bertie. He looked very cool in a spotless grey suit, with a white shirt and no waistcoat. He was reading a yellow-backed book, and his pointer, whom he had brought with him in case there was any shooting, lay near his feet, with her head upon her paws.

Presently he lifted his hand as he read and drew her nearer by the ears; she winced a little, but crept up and put her nose against his arm. By and by, when he had emptied his cup, he raised his large not ungraceful body and sauntered to the house with the cup.

In the small sitting-room the others had finished their tea and had all left, except Rebekah, who sat dreamily in her place near the window, cutting stars out of the orange peel on her plate. She had been up since five that morning, busy with housework and preparations for the next day, and was tired.

Presently there came the scent of a whiff from a cigar through the open window, and then her cousin Frank put his handsome face and shoulders in.

"All alone?" he said.

He stretched out his hand and set the empty cup down on the table. "Come out and sit under the orange trees? It's splendidly cool there."

"I can't; I've so many little things to do yet if we are to start to-morrow at eleven."

He folded his arms on the window ledge and drew softly from his cigar.

"How nice you look in that dress," he said, slowly. She was dressed in white muslin, with a little blue sleeveless jacket cut away from the waist. "I like that jacket; it shows your little waist.—What a little ting-ting-kie<sup>1</sup> it is!" He put out his large, soft, well-shaped hand, and let it rest gently on her waist for a moment. Then he drew it back and re-folded his arms on the window, and smoked. He blew a long whiff of smoke softly at her; he knew she liked it.

She began collecting the empty tea cups on to the tray. There was a quiet contentment in his eye as he watched her.

"What do you think of the new arrival?" he said, taking his cigar from his mouth and holding it between his two first fingers.

"I dislike him."

Frank laughed. "He's not attractive. I'm sure he uses coco-nut oil for his hair. One can forgive a man a great many sins, but not that." He put his cigar between his lips again and drew a long whiff. "Don't you think it's a little dangerous, too?"

"What?" Rebekah looked up at him quickly.

"Oh, settling him and Bertie down every day for three hours with nothing but the table to divide them and French verbs to unite them! It's a dangerous thing for any young man, or old either, to have a head of curls like Bertie's dancing within three feet of him!"

Rebekah stood up quickly again.

"I think——" she said.

He blew a whiff of smoke softly towards her across the table, which did not reach her, and laughed. "Oh,

<sup>1</sup> The ting-ting-kie is a slight, very lively bird, not much larger than a humming-bird, often seen moving quickly about among the grass and low bushes in South Africa. [The Cape wren-warbler.]

I know just what you are going to say—men should teach women and women should teach men; what difference does it make?—But it's not the Garden of Eden yet! Bertie'll be the finest-looking woman in Africa in a few years. Have you noticed how she's developed since I was here six months ago?"

Before Rebekah could answer, Bertie thrust her head in at the door to say old Ayah wanted her to come and see if the cakes were done; and dashed away again; and Rebekah took up the tray to carry it out with her.

"Then you won't come out under the trees with me?—I must go and be lazy alone!—What a busy little ting-ting-kie!—Well, to-morrow!—" He kissed the fingers of his left hand towards her and turned away from the window, his dog following close at his heels. As he walked along the stoep he hummed in a soft sweet tenor:

'Ten little nigger boys fuddling over wine,  
One got so jolly drunk, then there were nine!'

He went back and lay down on his mat under the orange trees, and Rebekah went to see if the cakes were burning.

At nine o'clock that evening Rebekah sat out on the stoep.<sup>1</sup> It was a dark night; the beetles buzzed about among the vine-leaves on the wall about her head. She was sitting on the step opposite the front door with her back turned to it; a square of light fell from the open door across the stoep beside her and dimly lighted up the stems of the orange trees beyond. She rested her elbows on her knees and sat looking out into the dark. After a while she glanced through the open door. In the room behind her she could see the little mother sitting in the rocking chair in the far corner beside the work-table, rocking herself and smiling and nodding her head, keeping time at the wrong places;

<sup>1</sup> Stoep: Stone-flagged veranda.

and Percy Lawrie, the new tutor, sitting at the piano, playing; and Bertie standing with her elbow on the top of the piano, with her eyes fixed on his face, so that, at a movement of his head, she might turn the page for him. She could see her lover lying on the sofa with his large arm thrown across his forehead, listening to the music, which was good; and in the room beyond she could catch sight of her father sitting at the bare deal table reading, with his grizzled beard pressed against his breast. She looked in for a moment, and then she looked away again.

What was she leaving it for, that quiet, peaceful life? She folded her arms on her knees. What was she leaving it for? The light that streamed out from the door lay in a square about her, and the little night-flies gathered thicker above her head. To-night, almost too late, she took up the old balances and began to weigh again, as she had done before. What was she leaving it for, that quiet, peaceful life?—that life in which the right was pleasantest and easiest to do, and lay right ahead; in which there was no being torn asunder living, between “I would” and “I must”; a life in which there was just as much to be done for others as might yield a grateful sense of satisfaction, yet leaving space for the individual life undisturbed; a placid, peaceful life, into which the noisy, babbling, worried, worrying world crept only once a week through the post-bag of the boy who brought the letters and newspapers from the town; a life in which news from the outer world came to one with a freshness it could never bear for those living in the hurry and turmoil of the great streams of life; a studious life, in which one might grow wise exceedingly over plants, and suck whatever joy there was in insects and stones; a thoughtful life, in which one might read and creep into the hearts of books, as they can only be crept into when the wheels of the daily life are grinding soft and low; a life in which suffering was small, and pleasure, if grey-tinted, calm and constant. What was she leaving

it for? She looked back again into the room, and then out into the dark. That scale looked heavy.

On the other hand, there was—well—a vague, insatiable hunger? Books, blackbeetles, well-performed duties—she had tried them all, and she was dying of hunger. Was it for that, that of which the far-off blue and purple mountains whisper when they say, “Come! Come! Come! We have that to give you know not of! Come! Come! Come! Come to us!”? Or was it a voice from that primal depth of nature which, before man was man, called beast to beast and kind to kind? Which, through all the ages, has summoned the human woman, in spite of the great Chaldean curse, “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception,” along one path? An ox at the roadside, when it is dying of hunger and thirst, does not lie down; it walks up and down; up and down, seeking it knows not what;—but it does not lie down.

She looked back into the sitting-room, where her cousin Frank still lay, with his large rounded arm in its grey coat sleepily thrown across his forehead, his full well-shaped lips almost smiling.

For four years, when he had placed the question before her, she had always decided she could not go with him; why was it that, six months before, his face had become always present to her; and at night even, she saw his hands, and heard his soft, sweet voice? She looked out again into the dark; and she knew as she sat there in the dark with her elbows on her knees, that, if she had been wholly free that night, and had to decide over again, she would yet have decided exactly as she had done.

She folded her arms closer on her knees and looked out at the dark stems of the orange trees, while the little night beetles fluttered thicker and almost rested on her dark head.

After a while, everyone went to the back dining-room to drink coffee, and took the lamps with them; Rebekah



still sat on alone in the dark, only a faint streak of light coming from the door of the dining-room beyond the passage.

Then Bertie came out with a cup for her, feeling her way along the uneven stoep with her feet.

"I can hardly see you, the light has dazzled my eyes so." She sat down beside her sister on the stoep, close to her, holding the coffee-cup for her.

"I hope the little Kaffirs will come and call me very early in the morning, before it's light; will you wake me if they don't? I want to go up in the bush and fetch more creepers and berries." She slid her hand through her sister's arm and let it rest in her lap; she still held the saucer of the cup. "If I tell you something, you mustn't tell anyone, Rebekah! But we've made an arch up in the Bush, and just before you are married we are going to bring it down, the little niggers and I, and fasten it over the front door; and you and Frank will have to go out under it! Don't tell anyone: it'll be such a surprise! And we're going to fasten a paper bag of rice in the top, and just as you go out one of the little niggers is going to poke it with a long stick, and all the rice'll come down on you. All Frank's collar and shirt will be full, and your dress, but you won't mind, eh?"

She took the empty coffee cup from Rebekah and put it down, and then slipped her hand into hers, so that their palms lay against each other.

"Do you know that something happened this evening, Rebekah?" She bent her head closer. "Frank gave me your wedding ring to try on. I went into the kitchen to show old Ayah, and when I was taking it off it fell under the wood pile, and we had such a trouble to find it. We had to pack all the wood out. Old Ayah was angry with me; she said it was unlucky to try on other people's wedding rings. She said if you did you never married, and that the most dreadful thing in the world happened to you. She wouldn't tell me what.—It's only a 'geloofie,'<sup>1</sup> isn't it, eh, Rebekah?"

<sup>1</sup> Superstition.

Rebekah, what *is* the most dreadful thing that *could* happen to anyone?"

"It would depend on who the person was," Rebekah said, still dreaming her own thoughts; but she drew her sister's head closer in to hers.

"It must be so nice to get married," Bertie said; "but when I get married I shan't like to go so far from the farm. I should like to be married to someone with a farm near here, and then you could come and visit me every year, and I could come and visit you. It must be so nice to be married. But I should like to have a pure white dress to be married in, not a mauve one like yours." Bertie laid her head on her sister's shoulder. "I suppose I shall be married some day; only I don't know whom I shall find to marry here. Perhaps someone will come like Frank did—from far away. Rebekah, can I come and visit you some day soon?"

"Yes, dear, as soon as you've learnt a little more, you shall come to me for a long time—a year or six months if you like." Bertie sat silent with her cheek resting softly on her sister's shoulder, the crown of her head pressed against her sister's cheek.

Sometimes I think, if one should live to be ninety, and all the sights and sounds of the world about become dim to one, that then, as one sits alone in the firelight dreaming, or out in the sunshine, the child sister who was young with us will come back and sit with us there. No one will see her; and we two will sit there alone, she with her long, flowing hair; and we will look out at life together with our young eager eyes that have known no mighty sorrow. I think it is, perhaps, that she may sit there with us, that we treasure her memory so all life through. We two will be always young when we are together.

After Bertie had gone back into the house through the dark front room, Rebekah's lover came through it, feeling his way; he came out on to the stoep.

"Where is my little Goody-two-shoes? All alone in the dark, as usual?" He felt for her with his hands, and raised her up. "What an unsociable little mortal it is! Come and walk with me."

He put her hand through his arm and drew the little blue shawl she had across her arm about her. He lit his cigar, and they paced up and down on the long stoep. Her head hardly reached his shoulder. "Chilly to-night," he said.

By and by the little mother came into the front room and, when she had bid them both good night, left the lamp on the table; and they paced on together.

"I must go to bed now," Rebekah said, after a few minutes. "I have to be up so early to-morrow."

"Don't make yourself too tired; we have a long day's journey before us."

He drew her close up to him and before him. They were standing in front of the door where the lamplight fell full on them. He raised her hands in his and put them alternately softly to his lips. He put down his head and whispered something very softly. Her cheeks turned the colour of the pale carnation she had fastened to his buttonhole before supper.

"Good night, my little one! My queen! My love."

Suddenly, with a little curious caressing movement, she raised herself and put her face against the side of his as he bent.

"What is it? Do you want to say something?" - She said nothing; but he thought he felt the soft touch of her lips against his neck; then she glided quickly from him.

He stretched out his arms towards her, for her to come back to him; but she shook her head softly and called out "Good-night," and the little figure in blue and white fluttered away through the front room.

He turned round slowly to pace up and down to finish his cigar before he took up the lamp and retired.

When Rebekah left him she went out into the long

passage. She called out a second "Good-night" at the door of her mother's room as she passed, and both her parents answered it; then she went to her own room at the end of the passage.

She lit a candle and set it on the table, and then sat down on the side of her small bed. The window was standing open and the pitch-darkness seemed to come in through it from outside; it looked out towards the kloof on the mountain, and the bush came down close to it. That little room had been hers for fifteen years, ever since she had given up to the new baby the cot in her mother's room.

It was bare and dismantled now. In one corner were two boxes, packed and corded, which contained her luggage ready for to-morrow's journey. Above the little table were marks on the wall where a book-shelf had been taken down. When her father first put it up for her, it was one little shelf containing a few children's books; but it had slowly mounted upward till there were shelves holding fifty or sixty volumes. A tall rough glass cabinet that had stood in the corner, in which she had kept her fossils and insects and her microscope, was packed up too; and above her bed, at the head, was a square mark on the wall and the holes of four tacks. When she was a child of six she had found in an old copy of the *Illustrated London News* a rough print of Raphael's Madonna della Sedia, and she had cut it out and fastened it there. No one told her it was a great picture, but when she looked at the little John, and the baby with its hand inside its mother's breast glancing round, and the mother with her striped shawl looking down at it, a thrill of quiet joy ran through her, that no other picture made her feel. She called it "*My picture*." Now it was taken down and folded away with her other things to go to her new home.

She sat on the side of her bed and looked out of the window. A curious weight and heaviness seemed suddenly to rest on her. The wick of the candle which

stood on the table began to burn long and red and bend over a little as the soft night breezes blew it. She snuffed it and then took up the light, and walked to the door at the end of her room which led to Bertie's.

Baby-Bertie lay on her bed with her arms thrown back on the pillow above her head. The sleeve of her nightdress had fallen back and showed her round arm, so small at the wrist, so large above the elbow; and one button at the neck had become unfastened and showed her small white throat; her face was flushed, though the window stood wide open and night air came in over the bed. The pillow was covered with a tangle of her brown curls.

Almost every night when, as a very small child, she had been moved into that room, Rebekah had lain by her to sing her to sleep; and when she grew older Rebekah had still crept in to lie beside her to talk and caress her before she slept. To-night Rebekah put the light down on the floor and knelt beside the bed. She put her head down upon Bertie's breast, under Bertie's arm, and pressed it there. It was as though, to-night, it was she who wanted to be caressed. But Bertie slept on—a deep, calm sleep. Presently Rebekah rose and partly closed the window, that the air might not blow so fully upon her. On a chair near the bed Bertie had laid out the lilac silk wedding dress Rebekah was to wear the next day; and the white tulle veil lay over it; the orange-blossoms Bertie would gather early in the morning. Beside it, on another chair, hung the muslin gown Bertie herself was to wear.

Rebekah did not glance at them; she took up the light and went back to her room. Through the open window you could hear the baboons shouting and calling to each other high up on the mountain-side.

She undressed slowly. When she stood ready at the bedside in her nightdress she took from under the pillow an envelope, and sat down again on the side of her bed and opened it. It was brown and worn, but you could still see the address. It held the first

letter her cousin Frank had written to her, after his visit six months before, when she had written to him, telling him she had changed her mind and would marry him. She read it again: "My one love! My own love! My only love!"

She had slept with it under her pillow ever since. In the envelope were parts of other letters. She took them out and looked at them. She did not need to read them; she knew them by heart. She kissed them one by one and then put them back in the envelope and the envelope under her pillow. When she had got into bed she put out the light, but two hours later she still lay awake. She could hear the baboons outside in the dark, shouting and fighting among the rocks on the mountain-side.

The next day Rebekah got married.

## CHAPTER II

### A WILD-FLOWER GARDEN IN THE BUSH

FOR a while after Rebekah went things seemed askew and out of tune at the old farm; but they soon made grooves for themselves and ran on smoothly enough.

In the bush the wood-doves cooed to each other, and the cock-o-veets called; the little grey, long-tailed monkeys climbed the trees and slid down by the monkey-ropes: the hares and porcupines visited the lands at night by the great dam; and the leopard sometimes came down on very dark nights to prowl about the kraals; and snakes made their nests and reared their young in the garden and under the dam walls. The great flat stone still lay baking in the sun on hot days; and the trapdoor spiders made lids to their nests and lined them with white silk and opened and shut them, though no little child with passionately interested eyes sat patiently waiting to see them open or shut; and at evening, the avondbloem<sup>1</sup> in the grass on the mountain opened their drab-tinted flowers and sent their rich sweet scent far and wide; though the small personage that had moved among them for twenty years, as a child and woman, was gone.

If the father missed his wise little daughter when he went down to the lands to see how a new variety of wheat was doing, and had no one to advise with over his grafts and flutes, or to discuss with him new remedies for cattle disease, he said nothing, but buried himself deeper than ever in the pages of his Swedenborg. And the little mother, if she missed her eldest daughter on

[<sup>1</sup> Aandblom: Evening flower (a species of hesperantha).]

baking days, and in the vegetable garden, and every day when rations were given out, yet found great consolation from the fact that she had now a new subject to lament over.

Old Ayah said that everything had gone wrong since Miss Rebekah went, and that there was no one to keep order, or who knew how things ought to be done; but she cooked the food and scolded the little Kaffirs, just as of old; and shook her head continually over the tergiversations of mankind in general.

Baby-Bertie missed her. She cried herself to sleep for several nights after she went; but even for her time brought compensations. After a while there were long weekly letters from Rebekah and great excitement when the boy came with the post-bag over the nek. She told about her little house, and its furniture, and the garden; and now and then there were little parcels with bits of muslin or silk to be made up into kappies or aprons for Bertie or the little mother, and odds and ends for old Ayah and the servants: and all these brought a new element of excitement into life, and were something to look forward to.

And there was the new tutor. Everyone liked him at the farm, except perhaps the father; and he only showed dislike, if he felt it, by speaking even less than usual if he was by.

The little mother liked him. He would sit listening to her for hours while she lamented over the hardships of her life and described her home in England, which she had left as a girl twenty-five years before. It had been a simple country parsonage, but, seen through the refracting mist of twenty-five years of African life, it had slowly assumed always increasing proportions in luxury and beauty. The schoolmaster could paint beautiful illumined mottoes, with borders copied from the flowers which Bertie brought him. He painted one to hang in the mother's bedroom, for her birthday, with a border of roses and lilies, and on it the motto, "Blessed are the pure in heart."



Bertie liked him. He did not trouble himself as to whether she remembered what he taught her; and he could play beautiful dreamy music, especially on Sunday afternoons, when Bertie, whom nothing else could keep long quiet, would crouch in the corner with her cat in her lap and cry softly, she did not know why.

When her three hours of school were over, he often helped her to work in the flower garden, which she had taken care of since Rebekah left, because Rebekah liked it so. Up in the bush he helped her to make a little garden for wild flowers, which he said would do better up there in their natural soil than down in the old soil of the farmhouse garden. She and he went often to see how the things were growing; and that was something new to Bertie, who had not been fond of the bush as Rebekah was, and had hardly ever gone there.

Then the autumn came. The gentians and everlasting-flowers had died in the grass on the mountain side; and the thorn trees in the flat were covered with long seed-pods, and their thorns became a more shiny white. Nothing important had happened at the farm since Rebekah left, except that one old batch of Kaffir servants had left and another had come; and the turkeys and goslings and chickens had bred out well and the yard was full; and the little mother had made two fine boilings of soap.

Then the winter passed and the spring came. It was ten months since Rebekah had gone. And then came the news she had a baby. The little mother cried. Old Ayah cried also, and said she felt sure the Cape Town servants would mismanage all the house while Rebekah was ill. And the father said, "Rebekah? Rebekah? Can it be?" and walked out to the far lands. And Baby-Bertie first laughed and then cried, and then ran away to tell her tutor the news—and then things settled down again.

One afternoon, when everyone had risen from the afternoon nap, the little mother sat sewing at her work-

table in the corner of the front room. The door on to the stoep was open, and through it she could see Percy Lawrie, the tutor, sitting on a chair on the stoep, reading. By and by Bertie came round to the front of the house from the yard and sat down on the edge of the stoep, just before him.

She threw off her kappie and fanned herself with it; and then looked up towards the chair where her tutor sat.

"You aren't angry with me, are you, Mr. Lawrie?" The tutor glanced down from his book at her, and then with one restless little black eye glanced in the direction of the open door where from his position he could see the mother sitting.

"No, Miss Bertie; oh no, of course not."

"Because you said——"

He made a quick movement as if to drive away one of the bees that was coming towards him: "Miss Bertie, there it is close to your forehead!"

She shook her head: "I don't mind." Then stretching out one hand towards him with a deprecatory little gesture: "I couldn't bear you to be angry with me! I don't like anyone to be angry with me—not even the servants! You *do* love me, don't you?"

She looked up at him with the expression a puppy dog might have when looking up into the face of a master he half fears he may have offended.

"Certainly I am not angry with you, Miss Bertie. I have no reason to be. You do your lessons very well."

"Baby-Bertie!" called the little mother from the sitting-room, "go to the yard and see if the hen is letting the goslings she brought out get to the little dam. Don't let her drive them back to the fowl-house; make haste."

Bertie rose slowly and went round the house again to the yard.

A little later the mother went to the kitchen door herself and found Bertie sitting on the lowest step with her white apron full of goslings which she had been feeding, and which she was going to carry down to the

dam, as the hen refused to lead them. The black hen moved round her feet restlessly, anxious as to what was to become of her brood.

The mother stood on the top step.

"Baby-Bertie," she said a little uncertainly, "I want to speak to you."

Bertie lifted her head and half-turned it to her.

The little mother hesitated.

"Just now, when you were round on the front stoep, I was sitting in the front room and heard you speaking to your tutor. I didn't quite like the way in which you spoke to him, dear."

Bertie turned her head more fully and looked up into her mother's face. "Well, I didn't mean to be rude to him," she said; "but, after dinner, when you all went to lie down, he asked me to go up with him to see our plants in the kloof, and I didn't want to go because I wanted to sleep. He seemed cross about it, but I didn't mean to be rude to him."

"Oh, you weren't rude to him, dear," said the little mother nervously; "it's not that." The brown eyes that looked up into hers abashed her. "You were quite polite to him; but you know, Bertie, girls and women don't ask grown-up men if they love them. You are not a real baby, Bertie, although we call you so.—But it's all right, my dear," she added quickly, seeing the surprise on Bertie's face, "only don't ask any man that again, dear. Take the goslings down to the dam."

The little mother turned and hurried quickly into the house; Bertie rose slowly with the goslings in her apron and walked away towards the small dam beyond the wagon-house, with the black hen anxiously following her.

It was about ten days after that the little mother fell ill. She had one of her bad sick headaches which sometimes kept her in bed for several days. All the house was kept perfectly still for her, and even the

cocks were driven away from the back door because their crowing disturbed her. Bertie gave up all her lessons and waited on her, bringing in little basins of soup or of gruel she had made, and driving away the little Kaffirs if they came to play too near the farmhouse, and keeping everything in order like an old, experienced housewife. Even old Ayah allowed she was turning into a wonderful housewife since Rebekah left, though she would never allow she was as good. The little mother almost liked to lie in bed, and see her trip softly in and out of her room, with her gruel and soup and fresh flowers, in her white muslin dress.

On the morning of the fourth day the little mother was better and fell early into a heavy sleep. About half-past eleven o'clock she woke, and lay expecting Bertie to come in: but all the house was still; Bertie had put no new flowers in the vase beside her, nor brought in her lemon and water. For more than half an hour the little mother lay there waiting and wondering. Then the quiet grew oppressive; she rose and partly dressed herself, and went out into the passage. There was not a soul stirring in the house nor a sound to be heard but the far-off voices of the men as they called to their oxen ploughing in the mielie lands. She went to the kitchen and found old Ayah standing before the fire shredding "snysels"<sup>1</sup> into the soup-pot; she said she had not seen Bertie since just after breakfast; the father was gone to the far mielie lands and the Kaffir maids to wash the churns at the fountain. The little mother went back to her own room; but, feeling restless, she went out again to the room that used to be Rebekah's and was now Bertie's, and opened the door. Bertie was sitting there with her arms folded on the low dressing-table before the window and her head resting on them. The little mother stepped gently up to her, thinking she was asleep. She laid her hand softly on her shoulder. Bertie raised her head slowly and looked into her mother's face. "Are

[<sup>1</sup> Snysels: Dough cuttings, for soup.]

you ill, my Baby ? ” she asked, bending down. Bertie said nothing. There was in the large eyes the look that an animal has when it is in pain ; the mute fear of a creature that cannot understand its own hurt.

She dropped her head upon her arm again.

The little mother saw nothing in it but the look of one who has a violent sick headache.

“ You are ill, my Baby, you are very ill ! Lie down on the bed and let me cover your feet with the rug.” She took Bertie’s arm and walked beside her to the bedside. Bertie moved heavily. “ You have done too much these last few days—you have taken too much care of me—do not let your feet hang down so, dear—so—that is better ! You take after me with these terrible headaches. I always had them when I was young.”

The little mother drew down the window blind. “ Lie still ; I’ll go and tell old Ayah to bring you hot water for your feet. We’ll get Mr. Percy Lawrie to ride over to Mrs. de Wet’s and bring some blue-gum leaves ; they are wonderful things for these sick headaches.”

She trotted out of the room, forgetting wholly in her anxiety that she herself had been ill. At the kitchen door she met old Ayah, and told her what ailed Bertie, and discussed the blue-gum leaves. Old Ayah said they would have to send one of the Kaffir boys on foot for them, as, about half-past ten that morning, Mr. Percy Lawrie had come down from the bush and had said he must ride into the town for the post at once, himself, and had gone on the only horse in the stable.

When the Kaffir boy had been found and sent off, old Ayah made up the fire to get some warm water, and the little mother went back to Bertie with a glass of lemon ; but she was lying with her face close to the wall, as though she were asleep, and did not stir when spoken to ; and the little mother stepped softly out again.

That evening at eight o'clock the horse came back from the town; but there was a strange boy riding it whom Mr. Lawrie had hired in the town. And there was a letter from him among the other post, in which he said that when he got to town he found a letter from his English relations awaiting him, which told him that his mother was dangerously ill and very anxious to see him before she died; it was therefore necessary for him to take the first post-cart and go on to the Bay<sup>1</sup> at once, if he wished to catch the next mail-steamer for England; so he regretted he could not return to the farm to say good-bye. They need not concern themselves about any clothes, music, or books that he had left, but might give them away; neither need they trouble about his last half-quarter's salary, as he was leaving without notice. He thanked them for all their kindness. He did not send any special message to Bertie, but wished to be kindly remembered to all.

As soon as she had read the letter, the little mother hurried away to Bertie's room to tell her the news. She had refused to take any supper; but she had undressed herself and was still lying on the bed with her face to the wall. The little mother sat in the rocking chair by the bedside and rocked herself, and cried intermittently. She said it was always so, troubles never come singly; first she had been ill, then Bertie, and now the dear, good schoolmaster had gone away, in such trouble! But Bertie said nothing. The little mother asked her if she had pain; she said, no, only her head ached; and turned her face deeper into the pillow.

In the middle of the night the mother got up and came and stood at the door of Bertie's room, then opened it and went in softly. She thought she had heard someone crying bitterly; but when she got to the bedside Bertie was lying motionless and seemed to be asleep, with her face turned towards the dark, and the little mother went away, thinking it must have been

<sup>1</sup> The Bay: Port Elizabeth.

the owl hooting, who came every night to see if any stray chickens were left out.

But the next morning very early, before anyone was up, Bertie got up and dressed herself, and went for a walk up into the kloof. When she came back she went straight to her own room and lay down, and took nothing all day but a little tea.

In the evening a little Kaffir herd, who had been up in the bush to look for some goats, came back with the news that Bertie's little wild-flower garden was destroyed; that all the plants had been pulled up by the roots and the ground trampled flat; but when the little mother went to tell Bertie about it she took no notice, and lay with her eyes half shut.

The next day she got up at the usual time and said she was well, that her head did not ache; but she ate hardly anything, and was white-faced, with rings under her eyes; and old Ayah and the little mother agreed that she had been very seriously unwell.

As the days passed she went as usual about what household duties she had, but remained white and silent, seldom speaking to anyone, and taking no interest in anything. As soon as her work was ended she went back to her own room, and closed the door and lay on the bed. The little mother thought she had been studying too hard; but old Ayah said it was a sickness which young girls often suffered from when they were about sixteen, and advised saffron root boiled in milk. Once or twice again at night the little mother thought she heard the sound of low crying, but when she went to Bertie's room all was silent, and she felt sure it must be owls on the roof.

Twice Bertie began a letter to Rebekah; but both times she tore the letter up, and it was never sent.

Of the little schoolmaster Bertie never spoke, though the little mother was always talking of him, speculating as to why he did not write again before he left Port Elizabeth, or as to whether his mother would be alive when he got to England. All the bits of music which

he had left behind, with his name written on them, disappeared, one by one; and from the walls the mottoes he had painted with frames of everlasting flowers about them, which he had helped Bertie to make, vanished. Only in the little mother's bedroom her motto with the painted border of lilies and roses still hung; otherwise there was nothing to recall him in the house.

One Sunday afternoon, two months after he went away, it had been a strangely sultry day, and since dinner Bertie had been lying down in her own room. About half-past four the storm burst; the lightning flashed incessantly, the thunder crashing close over the roof, while the rain fell in torrents till you could not see the wagon house; the tiny stream that came down from the kloof was a roaring, foaming river, and all the little footpaths were rushing streams.

Just before sunset, when it was all over, Bertie came out of her room and went to the back of the house which faced the sunset, and sat down on the rough stone step at the floor of the milk-room.

All the earth had been washed clean and fresh. The little streams in the footpaths had ceased to run, but in all the hollows in the hard ground were pools of water, and you could hear the stream still rushing in the bed of the mountain torrent.

Baby-Bertie leaned her head back against the door; a rich, fragrant odour rose from the fresh earth; she drew the white shawl she had thrown over her head closer round her face, and sat watching the wet world. The sun was setting at the end of the great valley below the farmhouse; all the west was a bloody pall of crimson, all the east a faint reflection of its redness. On the water of the great dam by the willows, in the windows of the farmhouse, in the puddles in the roadway, on the wet leaves of the thorn trees, even there it was reflected; and the little flat and the lower hills on the other side of the valley and the tall mountains were all touched with its redness. A curious feeling came



over her as she sat there watching it; it was as though a strong great hand were put out and took fast hold of her heart, that trembled and was so heavy, and held it fast. A curious quiet came over her. Was there not something that might make the past as if it never had been, and the "I have done it" as meaningless as "I have dreamed it"?

She sat gazing at that drenched world. It seemed as though the great hand stretched itself out and stroked her.

Slowly the crimson vanished and a faint glow lingered only at the far end of the valley.

Her father, as he passed her on his way back from the sheep kraals, laid his hand upon her shoulder: "It grows late and cold," he muttered; and she stood up and followed him into the house.<sup>1</sup>

When Bertie went to her bedroom that night and closed the door, she felt no terror of the room, as she had done lately; even thought it was better to be there alone than anywhere else. After she had got into bed it seemed as though a great hand made an arch over her and she crept in under it and was safe. She drew the cover up high about her and clasped her arms about a pillow, as if it were a person, and drew it close to her. Even then the croaking of the frogs filled her with no horror; and when she fell asleep, she slept till morning without awaking.

[<sup>1</sup> Olive once drew attention to this rhythmic paragraph thus, and commented upon it:

Her father, as he passed her  
On his way back from the sheep kraals,  
Laid his hand upon her shoulder:  
"It grows late and cold," he muttered.]

## CHAPTER III

### THE DAM WALL

THORN KLOOF was expecting visitors, and the life-blood stirred in its sluggish old veins. From the superannuated chairs and churns in the loft, to the china in the front-room cupboard, everything was turned upside down and inside out and washed and scrubbed and renovated. Even the pigsty was whitewashed and had a new trough, and the kraal walls were built up higher with thorn branches.

For the visitors were many and important whom Thorn Kloof was expecting, and it behoved it to put on its best face. Even the little Kaffirs who danced about naked all day on the old kraal heaps knew that something unusual was about to happen, and came to the house to beg for cast-off clothing, paper collars, or old shoes, in which to bedeck their small naked bodies; and they danced about in the sunshine more contentedly than ever, with a collar, or a boot, or a torn waistcoat. All day the Kaffir maids were busy scrubbing and cleaning, laughing and chattering; and all day the little mother trotted about giving orders, and old Ayah clucked and scolded; and Griet, the little Bushman girl, whom Bertie had got from her drunken mother a little while before for a pair of old shoes and a bottle of wine, rushed about hither and thither, doing nothing, but flaunting her little yellow petticoats in everybody's face, and chattering at the top of her voice, and tormenting the Kaffir maids. Bertie herself got up before sunrise every morning to gather oranges and figs for preserves, and was busy all day making jams and almond cakes.

It was just four full years since Rebekah married, and now she was coming to visit them for the first time, bringing with her her three small children, the eldest of whom was three years and three months old, and the youngest a new-born baby of eight weeks. She had almost died when it was born, and was coming home to rest for a while. Of late years she had often not written long letters though she wrote every week; she seemed always to be having a baby or nursing it, or to be otherwise engaged. Her husband was not coming with her, she wrote, as his business kept him in Cape Town, and later he was going for a six weeks' hunting trip into the Western Karroo. But her husband's brother, John-Ferdinand, was coming; he had come out again from England for his health, and was going to buy a farm in South Africa and settle there. He was coming to ask his uncle's advice as to the choice of a place.

A few weeks later there was also coming another visitor, a lady from England, who was delicate and recommended to their care by their English relatives; but no one knew much of her, or could tell what she would be like.

The excitement at the old farm was intense; everything was in motion.

One Saturday afternoon the wagon they had sent to the coast to fetch Rebekah came over the nek. The little mother began to cry as soon as they told her it was coming; and then everyone gathered at the back door to wait for it. Bertie would have liked to put on her kappie and run through the thorn trees to meet it, but she thought her mother would rather they all met Rebekah together.

At last the wagon drew up at the kitchen door, and Rebekah herself got out first. She looked smaller and more like a child than ever, with her little white face and her large eight-weeks' baby on her arm. While the little mother was kissing her and crying, the driver handed down to the father a stout, fair boy of two,

and then lifted down a shy boy of three, who looked like Rebekah, and hid his face in his mother's skirt as soon as he got to the ground. They all gathered close round Rebekah. Bertie caught up the boy of two and covered him with kisses, and ran towards the house with him; the little mother took the baby from Rebekah and began to cry afresh; old Ayah caught hold of its long white skirt and began to cry also; and Griet did all she could to coax the shy boy to take his face from his mother's gown and let her carry him; but he kept his face carefully turned away as they walked towards the house.

They were so absorbed in Rebekah and her children they did not notice John-Ferdinand, her cousin, who had been walking some way behind the wagon, and who had now come up. He was a tall, slender man, with a very small, delicate head and face, and black hair, curling close to his head, and eyes of such an exceedingly dark blue they seemed black, except in certain lights. His fingers were very long and tapered, and his hands transparently white.

Only the father saw him, and went up to shake hands with him, and said he was glad to see him. When he went away to give orders about the oxen, John-Ferdinand stood alone by the great whitewashed brick oven that jutted out from the side of the kitchen.

He was dressed in dark clothes and wore a soft, black felt hat; he leaned his elbow almost gracefully on the oven and stood watching the unpacking of the wagon. The Kaffir maids had come up from the huts now, and were dragging mattresses, pillows, boxes, canisters, and bundles out of the wagon, and throwing them down in heaps or carrying them into the house, all laughing, running, and talking. Over all Griet, with her small, yellow-brown, Bushman face, with its touch of Hottentot, was giving pretended orders to the Kaffir maids, and screaming in a shrill voice; tumbling in and out of the wagon over the heads of the others, doing nothing and glorying in the confusion.

Presently Bertie came to the back door to see how they were getting on. Then she noticed John-Ferdinand standing alone by the oven. It seemed to her he must feel lonely and neglected standing leaning there, no one speaking to him, and she ran down the steps towards him. He reminded her of the picture of Charles the First the night before his execution in her old school history, with his deep blue eyes looking out so gravely. When she came near him she suddenly felt shy, and almost turned away; but he came slowly forward to meet her.

"You are my cousin Baby-Bertie, are you not? I think you were not born when I was here twenty-one years ago."

He spoke gravely and held out his white hand. Bertie took it shyly.

"I have heard much of you from my brother and his wife; I think I should have known you anywhere had I met you."

Bertie said nothing, and hesitated; then, seeing a large canister standing on the front box of the wagon ready to be carried into the house, she turned towards it and seized it. Her cousin came forward.

"That is too heavy for you." He took it from her very gently and gravely. When their hands were near each other on the canister, she noticed how brown, and even rough, her hands were compared to his. She wrapped her right hand up quickly in her little silk apron as she walked behind him to the house. He put the canister down solemnly on the kitchen table; she thanked him quickly, and he went slowly out again.

That night, when Rebekah lay on the bed in the spare room hushing her babies to sleep, Baby-Bertie came in. She had changed since the old days when Rebekah married and Percy Lawrie was her tutor. The exuberant brown curls were gathered into a knot at the back of her head, which showed better the beautiful outline of her small round neck and broad

shoulders and the small round head. She had grown, as Frank prophesied, into a magnificent woman; but she had become quiet, the noisy gaiety of her early girlhood had passed, and she spoke and moved almost heavily. She would have been almost majestic if it had not been for the infant-like expression of the face, and something uncertain and almost wavering in her walk, arising from the fact that her feet were almost too small for her body. Her rich colouring was more perfect than ever; but in her round brown eyes there was a slight wistfulness, almost as though asking a perpetual question; and the corners of her small full-lipped mouth were more drawn in than they had been, as though always wearing a placid half-smile.

She stood at the foot of Rebekah's bed, dressed in a white muslin gown with blue bows down the front. Rebekah's eldest son lay at her back, with his arms twisted round her neck, and her baby lay at her breast; but the little fat blue-eyed boy had already gone to sleep in his cot in the corner.

She crept on to the bed and laid her head softly on her sister's knee.

"It is so nice to have you here, eh, Rebekah?" she said slowly. "It seems like long ago." She uncovered the baby's feet and looked at them. "Aren't they beautiful?" She held them in her hands. "So soft and warm!" She held her cheek against them for a moment, and then lay her head back again on Rebekah's knee.

Rebekah smoothed her hair with her free hand. "Aren't you very lonely here sometimes, Baby-Bertie?" she asked after a time.

Bertie smiled, the soft dreamy smile that was seldom wholly absent from her face. "No," she said. "Sometimes I feel as if I should like to go to Cape Town and be with you and the children; and sometimes I feel as if I would like to go somewhere and see people and things and be where other people are." She rubbed her cheek softly against Rebekah's knee. "And then again I

feel, no, it's better to be here shut in safely by the old mountains." A slightly troubled look crept into her face; then she said: "You know it isn't because I don't want to be with you, Rebekah; I am always wanting you; like when I was little." They were silent for a time, as the little boy with his arms round his mother's neck was just dropping asleep. "Rebekah," Bertie whispered, as he seemed to have gone off, "does cousin John-Ferdinand always look so grave?"

"Yes, he does not often smile; I never heard him laugh."

Bertie lay still. "Keep on stroking my hair, Rebekah; I like it so.—Don't you like people to touch you—I mean, if you like them?" After a while she added, "He's very clever, isn't he?"

"He took his degree well at the University."

Bertie caressed the baby's feet softly with her hand. "Don't you think he's very beautiful, Rebekah?"

At first Rebekah thought she meant the baby, then she understood.

"Yes, in a way. Most people think so. His beauty doesn't touch me."

"I feel so afraid of him, Rebekah. He's not merry like Frank, who used always to be laughing and joking. Do you feel afraid of him, Rebekah?"

"No."

"Oh!" said Bertie, and lay still.

Presently Griet came in to tell Bertie the milk was come and it was time to get supper ready. Soon after the little mother came in and sat in the rocking-chair at the bedside and told Rebekah how much greater her troubles were than they used to be: the maids did less work than ever, and her father was more silent and said "Um! Um!" in answer, when you tried to talk with him. She said Bertie was a dear, good, beautiful child, but she spoiled Griet and was like her father in not caring to talk much. She said how happy Rebekah must be with a husband always ready to chat and laugh,

and how nice it must be to live in a town where you could get your bread ready baked, and all kinds of things you couldn't get on a farm; and she lamented on till Bertie came to call them to supper.

A few nights after, when the father and little mother lay in bed, the father reading with his book open on his breast and the candle on the stand near his head, the little mother said, "Rebekah *is* changed, you know."

The father made a sound, which might mean attention or not, from under his thick iron-grey moustache.

"It's always when you talk to her as if she were thinking of something else; as if she didn't quite see you. She's different, she's quite different from what she used to be!"

"The cares of life," muttered the father, still looking at his book, and growing sleepy.

"What cares has she?" said the little mother. "She hasn't quite such an easy life as she would have had if she'd married John-Ferdinand. I've sometimes wondered why she didn't marry him, with the twelve thousand pounds of his own his aunt left him, when Frank had only his business. But, after all, I should have chosen Frank! He's so big and strong, and he's doing well, she says.—Of course, she has a great many children and only one servant and an outside boy, and no nurse—but she *will* look after the children herself—Rebekah always did work harder than anyone else! She never complains, but it's as if she was thinking of something else. Even when she——"

But the father's book had dropped over on to his chest and he was breathing heavily; and the little mother put the light out.

During the days that followed Rebekah's arrival the womenfolk at the house did not see much of John-Ferdinand. Sometimes he was out riding with the father, to look at the farms in the country round, to see



if any suited him; and when he was at home he took his book after breakfast and roamed away with his rug into the bush and did not come back till dinner. After the afternoon sleep and tea he generally went for a walk again. At meal-times he sometimes talked a little to the father and Rebekah about books. He was annotating a copy of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and generally had it with his pencil in his pocket. The little mother feared he must feel lonely, and offered him the gun to go out shooting; but he said he never hunted; and she felt ashamed, as if she had offered him something wrong. »

Yet, after the first ten or twelve days had gone, he began to stay more in and about the farmhouse. Sometimes, when in the morning Rebekah lay under the orange tree with her boys creeping about her, catching at the orange blossoms as they fell and stuffing them down her neck or making little heaps of them on the reed mat, and the baby lay on her arm, and Bertie was sitting at her feet shelling peas or peeling fruit, and chatting away softly about the wild cat that had stolen all her last brood of turkeys, or the man on the next farm who would quarrel about the beacons, or the sheep that had strayed in her father's veld, it would happen that Bertie would look up suddenly and see John-Ferdinand standing close behind them with his hands resting on the head of his cane, looking down at them; and she would at once become still and shell her peas or peel her fruit in silence, while John-Ferdinand said a few words to Rebekah, or walked on into the garden. He began also to sit a good deal too in the back dining-room, reading at table, where Bertie passed and repassed as she went about her work between the pantry and kitchen.

One morning, when Rebekah had been there more than three weeks, Baby-Bertie was kneeling in the pantry, making Boer biscuits. She had the dough in a large wooden trough on a low bench, and the black pans she had to fill placed across and across on the

end. She was kneeling on a footstool because she was too tall when she stood. She had finished kneading and was just going to begin making up, when she looked round and saw John-Ferdinand standing in the pantry door, watching her with his grave eyes, and his delicate head a little on one side.

"Rebekah isn't here," she said quickly and shyly; "she's gone down to the garden, and mother is in the ration-room."

"I am not looking for either of them, thank you."

He stood still, and then came a step nearer.

"May I come in and watch you?"

He seated himself on the wooden churn that was turned upside down in the corner between the bench and the dresser. He leaned forward slightly and watched her. A lock of her brown hair had escaped and hung in one little ringed curl over her low, broad forehead; her sleeves were turned up far above her elbows, and she had on a great snow-white coarse apron covering her dress.

She put the making-up board across the trough and broke off a lump of dough and began to make it up. She turned it this way and that, her downy cheeks growing pinker and pinker. First she tried to make snake curls, but they often broke in two as she was twisting them; then she made up double balls, and the one would hardly stick on to the other; she tried quickly three or four different patterns. She knew John-Ferdinand must think her so stupid, not even to be able to make up biscuits well. She would not have minded so much if the curl had not been hanging over her forehead, and she could not lift it off because her hands were doughy.

At last the six pans were full, and she stood up with a flushed face.

John-Ferdinand had not spoken once all the time.

He rose also.

"I am going for a walk in the bush up in the kloof," he said; "will you come with me?"

"I—oh—I don't know—my hands are full of dough."

"But you can wash them," he said gravely, almost smiling.

Baby-Bertie called to the girl to take the pans away and went to her own room. She put on her best white dress and a large white kappie with embroidery round it. Then she came out without saying a word to anyone; and John-Ferdinand and she walked round the back of the house and up towards the kloof.

First they went through the belt of small thorn trees, with seed-pods just forming and the soft, green, this-year's thorns turning white and hard, and with little honey-creepers hanging from here and there; and on, past the great round kunee trees, in whose depths you could hear the little birds hopping though you could not see them; and on, into the real bush, where the tall forest trees grew straight and high over the bed of the mountain torrent and made a great stillness in which the wood-peckers worked and there was always shade. Here the monkey-ropes hung from the trees, and the Kaffir bean trees shed their great seeds, till the ground was brown with them; and here and there out of the banks hung the great roots that the Kaffirs use to make medicine of. They crossed the bed of the mountain torrent, where the little stream of water, not thicker now in the dry weather than two fingers, was running among the great rocks, making clear pools here and there. On the other side of the torrent the path grew quickly steeper, and the mountain side rose abruptly. She took the narrow upward footpath made by the Kaffir maids when they went to fetch wood; the nam-nams<sup>1</sup> and jasmine shrubs made a thick wall on either side, and the wild asparagus hung out long waving arms. By and by they came to a patch where olive-wood trees grew thick among fragments of fallen rocks covered with long dry moss. Just here, suddenly, they came to a small open space; two mighty rocks that must

[<sup>1</sup> A shrub with a small edible berry (also "num-num").]

have fallen from their home in the crags on the mountain tops centuries before lay there, covered with long dry moss and red lichens. In the crack in one, a tall slender young tree was growing, and the space between them was bare, covered only by a smooth carpet of moss and sorrel, with little fern leaves intermingled here and there; and the small, sweet-scented mountain geranium with its tiny pale blossom was growing close to the foot of the rocks. A bush of the tall scarlet geranium, with its brilliant blossoms, grew up against one rock. On the other side the bush rose like a solid wall, nam-nams and sweet-henries mingling with the larger trees. The bare space between the rocks and the bush was just like a little almost square room, with a rich soft carpet.

John-Ferdinand broke away a branch of scarlet geranium, which left clear a little mound covered with fern and moss, close to the foot of one rock.

"Sit there," he said. "This is my little parlour; I come here often."

She sat down upon the mound, and he stretched himself at her feet on the carpet of moss and sorrel.

"It is very nice here," she said.

"Yes," he answered.

She took her great muslin kappie off and laid it across her knee. "It's quite cool," she said.

"Yes," he said.

Then they were quiet for a long time. At last he stretched out his hand, and from the branch of scarlet geranium he had broken he began plucking the brightest blossoms and mixing them with the small fern-leaves in the carpet. When he had gathered a tiny bunch he laid it upon her knee.

"They are very beautiful," he said.

"Yes," she answered—then he stretched out his hand and scattered them again over the moss and sorrel.

"Oh—I liked them!"

"They do not belong to you. I should not have given them to you," he said slowly; "this is yours."

He rose and from the wall of bush he plucked a small spray of the plumbago<sup>1</sup> that hung out everywhere.

"This is the sweetest flower of South Africa," he said. He placed it on her knee close to her hand, and lay down again on the carpet at her feet.

"Those others are not for you," he said, looking up at her. "They are for women in crowded ball-rooms and theatres. They can live there in the hot, stifling air—these are yours—they would fade there in a moment."

Bertie touched softly with her finger the delicate blue leaves and the spirally curled buds.

He turned round on to his face again; the crushed leaves of the tiny mountain geraniums sent up a sweet aromatic odour as he moved.

"Would you mind my reading?" he asked.

"Oh no."

He took out his book and laid it open before him on the turf, and leaned on his folded arms, reading at her feet.

Baby-Bertie fastened the sweet-henry spray he had given her with a pin to the front of her white dress; then she sat still. She could hear the wood doves cooing and the cock-o-veets calling in the cool morning air.

There was much wondering at the farmhouse and no little searching when dinner-time came near and Baby-Bertie was not to be found. It was an unheard-of thing that she should wander farther than the kraals, or the milk-house, or at most the end of the orchard. Griet, Bertie's little Bushman maid, who had been sent to look for her and who had searched for her even in the oven at last, now sat down on the step of the loft ladder and howled, covering her face with her pinafore

<sup>1</sup> Plumbago, or sweet-henry, as the Frontier children call it, is a delicate, pale-blue flower, growing on a large partly creeping shrub. Its skylike flowers are sensitive and curl up if roughly touched or plucked.

and knocking her heels against the lower rung, but partly peering out from the side of her pinafore now and then to see what effect her grief had on the group of little Kaffirs gathered below to watch her. She declared that the great spook with red eyes, whom she had seen at the fountain the evening before when she went to fetch water, had certainly carried off Miss Bertie and eaten her. The little Kaffirs looked up at her with wonder and awe. They regarded her as a person highly favoured and much gifted.

Presently she saw Bertie coming down the kloof road in the hot sun, for the day had now grown warm, with John-Ferdinand following her; and the sweet-henry on her breast curled up, but still fastened there.

Then Griet got down quickly and stood with her face buried in the wall of the gable, sobbing bitterly. (She had seen Bertie go up the kloof road, and knew where she was all the time.) She thought Bertie would stop as she passed her to find out the cause of her grief and when she did would pat her on the head, and perhaps promise to give her the point of the sheep's tail, to console her.

But Bertie walked by her without seeing her.

"Daddy-long-legs! Why didn't he stay in his own country!" Griet whirled round from the gable wall, making her little skirts stand out all stiffly. "Daddy-long-legs! Why did he ever come here! Taking our Miss Bertie away from us, to walk with him! Let him stay in his own country!" She whirled till there was only a cloud of yellow petticoats, and the little naked Kaffirs looked on.

After that day everyone knew where Bertie was when she was not to be found in the milk-room or the kitchen or the garden.

She and John-Ferdinand often went for walks. Sometimes they went in the early morning, when the dew was on the grass and you were afraid to set your foot down because you broke the spangles, and when

the calves were putting their faces through the wet bars of their kraals and the cows were lowing for them, and the sheep had their backs dark with the dew, as they streamed out of their kraals, with the herd-boy with his two sticks in his hand behind them; and when, as you walked through the mimosa trees and touched a branch, the dew rained down on you, and the long beams of the early sun made them sparkle like a shower of diamonds.

Sometimes they went in the evening up the steep bare spur of the mountain side that lay to the left of the farmhouse where the long waving grass grew; and they passed the herd-boy coming down with his flock of curly Angora goats, a great Boer-goat leading them with a bell round his neck, and the Angoras running hither and thither on every side to have a last nibble at the few thorn trees among the long grass. Then they sat high up on the ridge and saw the sun set at the end of the valley, and the farmhouse on the other spur of the mountain below them looked like a white speck among the dark orange trees; and they watched the long curls of blue smoke rising in the still air from the Kaffir huts, where the maids were lighting the evening fires with mielie cobs; and they saw the line of dust which hung over the road by which the sheep were going to the kraal; and in the dry grass about them the avondbloem (evening-flowers) were coming out, and the air was full of the sweet night scent. Then they would walk down the steep stony footpath together, and say nothing; except John-Ferdinand asked her which was the best footpath to take, or she told him the name of one of some little night insects which began to buzz by them. They were very silent.

But especially in the middle of the day, when it was too hot to walk anywhere else, they went up to the little parlour in the bush. John-Ferdinand lay on the ground and read, and Baby-Bertie took out sewing she had brought with her and sat at the foot of the rock; and they stayed there long hours, often without speaking.

The little mother was glad she went out with him; it was a change for Bertie, and it was bad to have a visitor one did not know how to entertain. No one thought it strange she should like to walk out with her cousin. Only Griet resented it. She turned up the little flattened ball in the centre of her face which was her nose whenever she mentioned him.

When Bertie was at home she was unusually silent, and went about her work more quietly than ever; only the placid half-smile that was always upon her face was deepened into something softer.

Rebekah was quiet too. When she was not actively attending to her babies she was always reading. She read when she woke in the morning, in the grey dawn she drew back the curtain and lay on the side of the bed with her book stretched out that the early light might fall on it, while the baby lay drinking at her breast. She read at night, when supper was over and she could go to her own room and shut her door and lie reading without interruption, sometimes till the old cock at the wagon-house began to crow; and often when she blew the light out she found the square of the window was already becoming dimly visible. She read in the afternoon, for a large part of the time when everyone else slept. Even when she was taking care of her children under the orange trees or in the orchard, she had always a book in her hand; and if one came near to interrupt her, she looked up with an eager, sharp look—the look of a hungry dog eating a bone, when someone comes near him.

She seemed like a creature returning to its old habitat and resuming its old instincts and habits; but never, even when she was a child and first learnt to read, had she read with such a concentration of almost fierce avidity. It was as though she hardly saw the world about her; even Bertie and her parents and the old farm she saw as through a mist, and only the world of her thought was real to her.

But one evening, when Baby-Bertie was in the milk-



room skimming the pans, Rebekah came with a mug to fetch fresh cream for her children. It was quite dark in the milk-room already, and Bertie bent over the table holding a lighted tallow candle in one hand, and the saucer in the other, with which she went over the pans, putting the cream into the little wooden cream vat at her side.

Rebekah stood still for a moment just inside the doorway. The light of the candle her sister held shed its yellow light full upon her, on her plain white dress and lovely down-turned face, and made her stand out from the dark shadows which filled the rest of the low room, almost illuminated. Rebekah stood looking at her for some seconds; then she came in and put her mug on the end of the long table. Bertie filled it. Still Rebekah waited, watching her work.

Suddenly Bertie said, "Rebekah, I wish I was different and not like I am! I wish I was clever. I am so big and heavy! I am so stupid!—I wish I were like you!" She looked up, and under her curled lashes the candle-light showed a tear had gathered.

"I can understand about work and such things," she said slowly, looking back at her work, "but I can't talk about books and all the clever things other people talk of. Sometimes, when father and you and Cousin John-Ferdinand are talking together at meal-times,—sometimes I wish I was dead. I want so to be different!" She bent down over her work. "Rebekah, do you think anyone could ever love me who was very clever and not stupid like I am?"

Rebekah, looking at the lovely face, half-turned from her as it bent over its work, almost laughed softly: "You need not fear people will not love you, darling; you will be loved wherever you go; I am only afraid you will be loved too much."

"Rebekah, I like so to be loved!"

Rebekah made a little caressing movement as though she would have put out her hand and touched the hand nearest her in which Bertie held the candle; then she

heard the baby crying through the spare-room window and hurried away with her mug. Before Bertie had finished the milk, the quiet dreamy smile had settled down on her face again.

The next morning, as Rebekah lay under the orange trees, with her book in her hand and her baby asleep on her arm, her boys playing beside her, John-Ferdinand came out of the house and appeared to be looking for someone and then turned to pass on to the orchard. Rebekah put down her book and told him she wished to go for a walk with him.

"I am sorry I cannot," he said. "I have asked Bertie to go with me as soon as her work is done."

"That does not matter. I shall not keep you long."

She rose and, calling Griet to watch the children, led the way round the corner of the house and past the kraals. She took the short cut through the mimosa trees towards the great dam in the flat. John-Ferdinand followed her with the copy of Milton he had been reading showing from his breast pocket. The path among the trees was so narrow that the thorns in the mimosa trees pecked at them as they passed.

When they got to the dam, Rebekah led the way along the narrow footpath that ran on to the broad top of the earthen wall that formed the dam. The path was almost overgrown with love-grass and chickweed and widows; and the great willow trees which grew at intervals hung over the path and dipped their branches into the water beyond. Rebekah and John-Ferdinand stood knee-deep among the weeds under the willows. They had not spoken all the way down, and they still stood silent for a few minutes.

On the other side of the dam, where the water was shallower, the lilies and water plants floated; and the goslings swam in and out among them and disappeared and reappeared among the chickweed and wild mustard that grew rank to the water's edge. Beyond them was a little mound where Bertie's twin sister, who had died

when she was born, had been buried. Bertie often came down to weed about it and keep it clear; but during the last weeks she had forgotten it, and the weeds had almost overgrown it.

Rebekah took off her kappie and held it in her hand.

"John-Ferdinand," she said, "I wish to speak to you about Bertie."

John-Ferdinand bowed his head gravely, to show he was attending, and looked down at her.

"She has led a lonely life here. A woman who grows up alone on a solitary farm in South Africa is not quite in the position of most other women. A child of ten, who has lived in a village or town and has gone to a school and grown up among other children, has more knowledge of the world in a thousand ways than she can have even at fifteen or twenty. She may know much of books, and be skilled in domestic labour or—she may even be exceptionally advanced intellectually in many ways; she is still a child in the knowledge of men and life. Bertie does not know even the world of books."

John-Ferdinand bowed again, and looked down at her with his dark head delicately poised a little on one side.

"You have seen a great deal of her since you came here. I do not blame you; it was natural you should. She is the only interesting thing here; and she is very beautiful. But I am afraid she may possibly grow to care a little for you, John-Ferdinand, seeing no one else."

John-Ferdinand moved as if he were about to speak, but she raised her hand and stopped him.

"She has said nothing of her feeling towards you to me; I am acting entirely on my own judgment. But she has seen no men in her life but a few shop clerks and farmers' sons who may have come here on business or have served her in a shop when she was in town; you are the first man of mental and physical attractions with whom she has been thrown into close contact. It has been almost inevitable that she should be attracted

to you, and it has been almost as inevitable that you should feel attracted towards her. And yet, when you marry, you will probably require in your wife certain qualities which Baby-Bertie has not : more intellect and more calm strength of character. Now, if this is the case, John-Ferdinand"—she looked up at him—"and you feel that, in spite of her great beauty, she is not the type of woman you can make your wife, then I think you ought to go away from the farm and not seek to meet her again. It is an absorbing love she would love you with, John-Ferdinand ; a love you probably cannot understand. You might become all the world to her.—Some women with complex, many-sided natures, if love fails them and one half of their nature dies, can still draw a kind of broken life through the other. The world of the impersonal is left them : they can still turn fiercely to it, and through the intellect draw in a kind of life—a poor, broken, half-asphyxiated life, not what it might have been ; like the life of a man with one lung eaten out by disease, who has to live through the other alone ;—but still life. But Bertie and such as Bertie have only one life possible, the life of the personal relations ; if that fails them, all fails. If you chop down the stem of a mimosa tree, years after you may come and find from the bottom of the old dead stem sprouts have sprung, which will even bear flowers, though there will never be the glory of the central stem ; but an aloe has one flower, once ; if you cut that down, nothing more comes. If the life of personal relations fails Bertie, all will have failed her ; I want to save her from this.—You are a man of principle, John-Ferdinand ; I know you are a man who always does what he believes to be his duty. I think you will feel it your duty to go, if you know you cannot care for her."

"Rebekah," he said softly, still looking at her, "I love your little sister. She is the one absolutely pure and beautiful thing life has ever yet shown me. From all the world of men and women I turn to her to find in her the one absolutely spotless, Christ-like thing I

have known. I am a nobler and better man when I am in her presence. No other woman ever could be, or ever will be to me, what she is. When as a youth I asked you to marry me I was drawn to you by your intellect, your strange intensity and delicate physical refinement and beauty, and your devotion to your duties. My feeling for her is wholly different. For the first time I understand now how men have made a god of woman—the eternal virgin mother!—If I am all the world to her, Rebekah, she is more than all the world to me.”

Rebekah looked up at him and then away across the water. There was no mistaking the ring of sincerity in the man's voice; his dark blue eyes were moist with unshed tears. They stood quiet for a moment. The willow trees sifted down the last of the spring's little dried catkins on Rebekah's brown hair and on John-Ferdinand's black felt hat.

“If I have not yet spoken to her of my love, Rebekah, it has been because she has seemed to me almost too pure and sacred a thing for me to approach. Can you understand? Have you never felt, on a solitary mountain side, that some delicate flower you have found growing there was too beautiful to be plucked?—that it was too pure for your finger to touch it?—When your father has helped me to secure a farm in this neighbourhood, so that I shall not need to take her far from her parents and her old home, I shall lay my love before her. I hope it will not be long before I take her to myself for ever.”

Rebekah looked away from him to where the little goslings swam in and out among the water-lilies.

“If that is so,” she said slowly, “I have no right to say more, and perhaps I should (? not) have said what I have.” She gathered together her little skirts and turned to lead the way along the little footpath. Then suddenly she turned. “If I knew,” she said, “that you would ever fail her, I, I, with my own hand would rather take her life, and see her lying buried there,

beside her little sister." The crimson flush had risen suddenly over her face, darkening even her forehead; it died away in an instant, and left the face paler than before. She walked on before him, the black widows shaken from bushes as they passed sticking fast to her skirts and to his black trousers. When they got off the dam wall, she took the path among the thorn trees, and walked so fast John-Ferdinand could hardly keep up with her. When they had climbed almost to the top of the long rise on which the house stood, she stood still for an instant and took out her penknife and cut a large many-horned gall growth from one of the mimosa branches. "I am collecting these," she said, half turning to him, "to see whether the galls on the different species of mimosa are all quite alike, or whether they are different on different species of the tree." Then she walked on quickly.

When they came out of the thorn trees at the kraals, they saw the white tent of a cart, which stood outspanned near the back door.

"The woman from England must have come," she said; "they were expecting her to-day."

As they came nearer the house they saw Bertie standing on the top kitchen doorstep, and beside her a tall woman with square shoulders, dressed in a starched mauve cotton dress, with white collar and cuffs. Bertie, in her white muslin and blue ribbons, was motioning with her right hand, evidently pointing out to the stranger the interesting points in the landscape, from the wagon house and pig sty to the great dam and the road over the nek, which could all be seen to advantage from the top of the steps. As they approached the steps, Bertie and the new-comer came down to meet them. She had light hair of an almost drab shade touched with yellow and parted down the centre. It was brushed smoothly down on each side, showing strikingly the large, flat-topped, broad shape of the head. Her forehead was high and arched in the middle; and her large eyebrows were even more

arched, so that between them and the pale blue eyes below, over which the eyelids habitually drooped, almost the whole bulb of the eyeball showed under its eyelid. Her eyelashes were thick and almost white, and drooped over her cheeks readily as she looked down. She walked towards them with a long, even stride that contrasted with Bertie's wavering uneven little footsteps.

She held out a large, flat, cool hand to Rebekah and John-Ferdinand when Bertie introduced her.

It was not easy to say what her age was; it might have been anything between twenty-eight and thirty-eight; the perfect placidity of her face might make her appear older than she was, or, being old, might make her appear younger.

"You must have had a warm drive from the town," John-Ferdinand said.

"No, it was very pleasant," she said slowly; "the view was very interesting."

Then they all turned and went into the house.

## CHAPTER IV

### SHOWING HOW BABY-BERTIE HEARD THE CICADAS CRY

“WHEREIN lies this woman’s charm?”

This question Rebekah had asked herself more than once before Veronica Grey had been at the farm three weeks.

She looked at the angular high shoulders, at the rather large mouth, somewhat drawn down at the corners as in a fixed half smile; at the thickened finger-tips on the large, flat, snow-white hands; and at the white eye-lashes—and found no immediate answer.

Everyone at the farm seemed to like her except Griet.

The father liked her. He seldom went to his mielie lands to examine the new varieties of grain he was experimenting with, or to the orchard to look at his grafts, but he took her with him. Her past life in a villa in the south of London could hardly have yielded her an extensive knowledge of African field growths, and she did not know a mielie land from a wheat field, or a bed of sweet-potatoes from one of pumpkins; but she always said, “Ah, yes,” when the father discussed the varying growth in his beds and their manures; and when she looked at the grafts she said, “How *very* interesting!” or, “How *wonderfully* they are growing!” and the father liked her company.

The little mother liked her. On days when she had a headache and went to lie down, Veronica came and sat in the rocking-chair beside her bed, knitting, and saying nothing; and when the little mother was better and



able to talk, she sat rocking and listened to all her complaints, and never tried to put a good complexion on to her troubles; she only said, "How strange!" or, "That is just what my mother often said!" and the little mother liked her.

Bertie liked her; she was something new to take care of. When the hand-lambs and all the poultry had been fed, and there were no sick Kaffirs to attend to, and Rebekah's children needed nothing, there was always still Veronica. She used to bring a glass of milk to her bed at six in the morning, when the cows were first milked, and little cups of broth or beaten-up egg and wine between breakfast and dinner; and she insisted on her sleeping in the room next to her own, which used to be Rebekah's, so that if she woke in the night and needed anything she might knock on the wall and not feel lonely—as Bertie herself still often felt, when she woke in the night and had to clasp a pillow to her and hold it tight in her arms to make herself feel as if there were someone sleeping by her and caring for her. She ironed Veronica's white dresses herself, because the maids could not make them smooth and stiff enough.

John-Ferdinand liked her. When Bertie was busy with her housework, he used to read aloud to Veronica from the *Idylls of the King* or *Paradise Lost*, and she would sit knitting and listening. Often she would drop the work into her lap and sit with her hands across upon it and her blue eyes fixed on the cover of the book he was reading from; for half an hour she would sit motionless, listening; and sometimes she asked him to read a long passage over again; and that he liked most of all.

Old Ayah liked her; she said she gave no trouble and kept her room beautifully neat: there was never a thread or a scrap of paper on her carpet; and her large flat-soled thick English boots stood exactly side by side under the dressing-table, toe to toe; and her gloves lay ready on the dressing-table, in case she should be going out, finger to finger and thumb to thumb; and she

gave old Ayah, who did her room, a shawl she had knitted.

As for Rebekah, she was so busy attending to her children and reading that she seldom spoke to anyone; and no one noticed that she never addressed a remark to Veronica, and generally left the room or the stoep when Veronica came there.

But Griet showed her dislike actively. One evening, when she went to the fountain to fetch water for the baths, she found a fine large toad under a stone, with great warts on his back. Carefully catching it with two sticks, she put it into the pail, which she carried home on her head and emptied into Veronica's bath. She hoped that when Veronica got up the next morning and stepped into the bath she might not notice it till she was in the bath. About the time Veronica usually got up, Griet stood outside her bedroom door, first on one leg and then on the other, rolling her eyes and holding her breath, momentarily expecting to hear a step into the bath and then a wild cry and a flight across the floor. But instead a calm voice called to her from the bedroom, "Griet, I think there is something moving in my bath; come in and see what it is and take it out!" And Griet, bursting with rage, had to come in and recapture her toad. "How did that 'thin-eyes' know that I was there!" she cried indignantly when rehearsing the story to herself as she emptied the bath; and her defeat increased her antipathy; but she contented herself with setting Veronica the cracked plate at teatime, and the bluntest knife at dinner; and occasionally putting a small drop of aloes into the coffee she took to her room in the morning; in which case Veronica always left it undrunk.

One Saturday night, when Veronica Grey had been just eight weeks at the farm, the father and John-Ferdinand came home to supper. They said they had signed an agreement with the owner of the next farm, the tops of the tall blue-gum trees about whose home-

stead were just visible over the nek when you climbed the mountain side, to sell his farm to John-Ferdinand for five thousand pounds, and to give him possession at once.

There was much talking about it at the supper that evening. Veronica Grey said she had often wondered what that farm was like, and John-Ferdinand said they should all go and see it the next week. Only Rebekah could not go, as her visit had come to its close, and she was leaving at daybreak on Monday morning in the ox-wagon to begin her journey to Algoa Bay,<sup>1</sup> from which she would go by sea to Cape Town.

After supper, the mother, who had a headache, went early to bed, and Rebekah went to her own room; the father sat with his books in the dining-room; Bertie, who was finishing a dress for Griet to wear the next day, sat by the lamp at the centre table in the front room sewing, and John-Ferdinand sat beside her reading, but now and again he looked away from his book and watched her fingers as they sewed. Veronica sat in an arm-chair in the far corner of the room knitting; as she knitted, from time to time her eyes, from under their long white lashes, rested on the two who sat together at the table. At last she rose and gathered her work into its bag, and went to the little mother's bedroom.

"Would not you like me to come and sit by you a little?" she asked; and she seated herself on the rocking-chair beside the bed. For a long time there was nothing to be heard but the tick, tick of her needles. By and by, however, her hands dropped into her lap and she sat looking at the painted motto that hung on the wall opposite the bed with its border of lilies and roses.

Then the little mother, who had been half dozing, woke up, feeling much better, and showed an inclination to talk.

Veronica said that was a very pretty motto on the wall. The mother lay on her side and told her all the

<sup>1</sup> Port Elizabeth.

story of Percy Lawrie, how he had stayed on the farm and taught Bertie, and how nicely he could paint; how he had had bad news from England and had gone away suddenly and they had never heard any news of him again. Veronica listened, and knitted, and rocked herself. Then the little mother gradually got drowsy again and went off to sleep.

When she was sleeping soundly, Veronica rose and rolled up her work and put it into the little bag upon her arm, and went out of the room, closing the door behind her. In the passage all was quiet, but you could hear Bertie at the piano singing sacred music, and John-Ferdinand's voice singing the bass, through the closed door of the front room. The long passage itself was dark; but through the half-open door of John-Ferdinand's bedroom at the far end shone a light. He had evidently not put his candle out when he went to supper. As she went towards her own room she passed John-Ferdinand's door. She looked round quickly; every other door into the passage was closed, and John-Ferdinand's and Bertie's voices could still be heard singing.

With a long, light, smooth step she passed into John-Ferdinand's room. The candle stood on the dressing-table. She looked round the room. It was the first time she had ever stood alone in a man's bedroom. Her father had died in her early childhood and her brother was grown up and had gone to China before she could well remember, and in the quiet home in the south of London, where her widowed mother and four unmarried sisters lived, no men visitors had ever come. She stood just inside the door and looked round. On a rack against the wall behind the door hung a row of articles of man's clothing—coats, and jackets, and waistcoats, and trousers; under the dressing-table was a row of boots, and a pair of man's slippers stood beside the bed. She walked up to the clothes behind the door and passed her hand softly over them; she took down a greatcoat and felt the velvet collar and the buttons;

she rubbed her cheek gently against the shoulder of the coat. So a man's shoulder felt when you put your face against it. She took down a pair of trousers, stroked them, and hung them up again; she felt the buckles at the back of a waistcoat; then she walked to the washing-stand. There was nothing there but the ordinary soap, and sponge, and toothbrush, that any woman might have used, as John-Ferdinand did not shave but clipped his soft beard; but she touched the soap and toothbrush with her finger. She went to the bedside; there was a large braided bag before the pillows; she turned back the flap; there was a man's thick linen garment inside; she did not take it out, but stood listening to hear if anyone were coming. But Bertie and John-Ferdinand were still singing in the front room, and there was no other sound. She turned to the dressing-table; there were his brushes and combs and a large bottle of lavender water. On each side of the glass was a small pile of books. She ran her fingers quickly over them. From under the looking-glass protruded the end of a closed, old-fashioned, portrait case. She drew it out and tried to open it; she moved the little hook that fastened it. Inside the case was an old daguerreotype portrait. It was the portrait of a little child of four with a mass of brown curls about its head; the face was smiling; there were dimples in the cheek and in the chin; the child seemed bursting with life and joy, and in its hand it held a bunch of flowers. The old tinted daguerreotype had the colour of life, the cheeks and lips were red. She held it sloping towards the candle, at such an angle that she could see it truly through the glass. There was no mistaking whom it represented. It was Bertie as a child, and the only photograph of her in existence. John-Ferdinand had begged the loan of it from the mother, that he might send it to Cape Town with Rebekah to have a life-size enlargement taken from it.

Veronica looked down closely into the face, and her eyes contracted slowly at the inner corners. Quickly

she put the case down open on the table, and, placing her large flat thumb on the face, she pressed; in a moment the photograph had cracked into a hundred fine little splinters of glass radiating from the face, which was indistinguishable. With smooth quickness she closed the case and slipped it under the looking-glass, without one bit of glass falling from its place. She stood listening to hear whether anyone was coming. There was no one; and with one or two long, even steps she glided out of the room; with three or four more she had reached her own and closed the door.

The next day the morning broke peaceful and windless, but it promised to be unusually hot later. A deep Sunday stillness reigned about the farmhouse after breakfast. The Kaffir servants were gone to their huts to have their Sunday rest; old Ayah sat at the kitchen door slicing salad and keeping an eye on the pots inside with the Sunday dinner. Griet had gone off to the far lands to pick some green mielies, swearing vengeance upon all the world because she had been accused by old Ayah of breaking Bertie's photograph when she dusted John-Ferdinand's room, and had narrowly escaped the force of old Ayah's hand by Bertie's intervention. The father, in his Sunday best, was reading Swedenborg in the front room, with his hair very much brushed. The little mother was busy in her bedroom, and Rebekah with her boys was, as always, out under the orange trees upon the mats.

John-Ferdinand came out at the front door, looking for Bertie to go for a walk with him. Rebekah did not glance up from her book as he passed, and he walked on through the flower garden and down into the orchard beyond.

Of late, without actually shunning him, Bertie had seemed to elude him; it seemed almost as though she feared to be alone with him; yet when he spoke to her there was a wavering in her colour, and a soft brightening about her face she could not hide.

He wandered into the orchard. The long dry grass

was brown under the trees, the young unripe peaches had fallen by hundreds into it, and the leaves of the peach trees were beginning to grow yellow for want of rain. At the great pear tree in the middle of the orchard, on the bench, which Rebekah had had put up around the stem when she was sixteen, he saw someone sitting. At first he thought it might be Bertie, but when he came closer he saw it was Veronica Grey.

She was dressed in one of her spotless, stiff cotton dresses with broad, stiff, white linen collar and cuffs; a great straw hat with only a simple band of ribbon tied about the crown lay on the bench beside her, and a book of Sunday sermons lay open beside it. The little sunbeams came through the pear-tree branches and played on her smoothly brushed yellow and drab hair; but her eyes were fixed on the row of peach trees before her, and her long white fingers were clasped together upon her knee.

John-Ferdinand stood still at a little distance and watched her. It was a curious picture of placid calm, not a line in figure or dress moving as she sat under the soft playing shadows and lights. He stepped closer to her and asked her if she had seen Bertie. Without unclasping her hands she turned her face towards him and said slowly, "No," and then looked back again at the trees.

John-Ferdinand turned away; yet as he wandered up through the orchard the placid picture under the tree was with him. He walked through the flower garden and out at the gate at the north gable of the house, and took the little footpath among the mimosa trees that led up into the kloof.

Now he was thinking only of Bertie. He pictured the farmhouse among the blue-gum trees as it would be when he and Bertie lived there; Bertie, with her beautiful face and queenly figure lighting up the world about her, till lambs and servants and everyday work reflected that beauty that had made the old farm so lovely to him. He saw her as she had looked that

morning at breakfast, when someone had told her that her old Kaffir man she was nursing was worse, and she had left her breakfast and gone out with a jug of hot milk in one hand, and the bottle of medicine in the other, to go to the huts and see if she could do anything for him; as deeply concerned as if it mattered to anyone but herself whether there was one old woolly head in the world more or less. A creature so full of loveliness and love for every living thing, was she not satisfying to the whole soul and body of a man? As he followed the little footpath among the trees, his mind ran on to the long years that were to come; he saw children with their mother's fawnlike eyes looking up at him and calling him father, and the thing he loved lying always in his bosom to comfort and complete his life: it was as though he looked up a long valley where ridge succeeds ridge in new colours, till the far end was reddened with sunset glory.

So far had his thought led him, that he had crossed the almost dry bed of the mountain torrent and had reached their little room and almost trodden on a little ungloved hand, before he saw that Baby-Bertie was before him, sitting at the foot of their rocks, with one hand resting on the moss beside her.

"Why did you come without me?" he said, as he lay down on the turf beside her, so close that his folded arms rested on the edge of her white dress. He had never before done so. "I thought I should find you here."

She was dressed in her best white Sunday dress, with bows all down the front, and a blue ribbon round her neck.

"Do you know what I was thinking of as I came up?" he said, after a while. "I seemed to be looking into the future; and it seemed to me," he added softly, "that I was looking down a long sun-lit path that passed over ridge after ridge, each one more beautiful than the last, till the end, far beyond human sight, lay hidden in glory."



Bertie sat quiet; she was thinking of no beauty in the future, only of a hand very near to her, that she would have liked to bow down to and kiss humbly.

John-Ferdinand spoke in a yet lower voice: "Nothing can ever alter, nothing can ever change, our happiness, that springs from such deep love. Death itself will be but going home to the Father's house to be made perfect there in that which made us loved and loving here." He looked up at her. "For those who love as we love, there is no parting, and no death, only eternal union."

She listened, and the sound of his voice was music to her; but of the meaning she took in little.

"I do not like to think of what will come," she said, bending her head; "I like all things to be just as they are now; never, never to change! I wish they would always be just so!"

He too at that moment seemed content with an unchanged present. He lay still watching the little hand that rested on the sorrel close to his; and once he looked up at the opening overhead, across which at intervals small thunder clouds were already beginning to move quickly against the hot blue sky. Why did it seem so hard to take that woman to his arms and tell her how he loved her? Why did she seem, without repulsing him, to move away from his hands when he meant to put them out and hold her?

It was already nearly midday, and a sultry stillness was beginning to settle down over the bush. Nothing broke it but the shrill cry of some cicadas hidden in the thickets and in the stems of the trees.

Then he rose from the ground, leaned his elbow against the rock, and bent down over her.

"Bertie, my darling," he said softly, "you must not miss me too much if I go away next week. I shall only be gone for a few days, that I may get all that will be necessary for our new home. And then I will come back to you, and you will come to me, and we will be together for ever; never to part while life is left us.

You are my wife now, already, my darling; are you not?"

He bent down and wound his left arm round her, half drawing her up to him. For a moment it seemed as though she would have leapt up and nestled close to him; then she loosened herself from his arms and sat down again on the bank. "You must not touch me, you must not kiss me—you must stand still, just where you are—against the rock—I want to say something to you—I want to tell you something."

For a moment he tried to draw her to him again; then silently, wondering, he obeyed her. She sat on the mound at his feet. There was that in her voice that compelled him to listen, and the dimpled hand that had rested on the turf was on her knee now and quivering. Her face he could not see; he looked down at her waving hair that hung in little curls about her forehead.

For a moment she was quiet. He waited; but still she said nothing.

"My little Baby, what is it you want to say to me? I have not long ago told you how I love you, only because I thought you knew, as I knew, how you loved me."

He bent over her again, with his face above her head.

"I do not know what to say—stand back as you were before—with your arm against the rock."

He obeyed her, and waited.

"Long ago I had a schoolmaster; his name was Percy Lawrie—I—I liked him—I liked him very much.—He was very kind to me. I liked him at first, then afterwards I hated him——" The hands she had now folded together in her lap were covered in the palms with a cold perspiration; "—I did not know—he said he would be angry with me—I did not want him to be angry with me—I didn't want to—I didn't know, you see!—Oh, what shall I do!—What shall I do!" She half started up, and then sank down on the mound again.

John-Ferdinand looked down at her, white, motionless.

"He went away that day—I never saw him any more!"

John-Ferdinand leaned heavily on his arm on the rock above her, his face an ashen white. The scent of the crushed geraniums on which he stood seemed to rise up overpoweringly strong; and the only sound was the crying out of the cicadas: they seemed glorying in the hot stillness of the bush.

John-Ferdinand took his elbow from the rock.

For a moment Bertie made a movement as though she would have moved up close to him; then she sat down motionless.

"Bertie, do you mean that you gave yourself to him?"

She nodded.

He waited in silence.

"My poor cousin!" he said slowly.

There was a cicada in the bush, just to the left, that cried louder and louder; its cry seemed to ring through her brain; she wondered when it would leave off.

"Let us go home, Bertie," he said slowly.

She stood up from the mound. The bush had become very hot and deadly still; only the cicada's cry seemed ringing everywhere. She began to walk down the little path; John-Ferdinand followed her. The leaves of the plumbago bushes on either side hung flaccid and curled, and even the asparagus branches drooped, waiting for the storm that must come later. They crossed the bed of the mountain stream and climbed the bank on the other side where the great roots hung out, and the ground was covered with the fallen Kaffir beans; the leaves and dried sticks cracked under their feet as they walked. Just here, where the trees were tallest and met overhead and the monkey ropes hung down, and where there was deep shade and stillness, they met Veronica Grey coming up from the farmhouse into the bush, holding her stiff white skirt about her with one hand and in the other, which drooped in front of her, her half-open book, with her fingers

between the leaves. She smiled tranquilly as she passed them.

"What a peaceful Sabbath stillness reigns up here!" she said; and she walked on higher into the bush, as John-Ferdinand and Bertie went down.

When they had got beyond the belt of tall trees where the small mimosa trees and scattered kunee trees grew, she turned suddenly and looked up at him.

"I hurt you so! I hurt you so!" she said.

He looked down at her.

"It is not pain that matters, Bertie; it is sin," he said slowly.

She looked up into his white drawn face, with its compressed nostrils. Then she gathered her skirts tight about her and fled down the winding footpath. An outstretched branch of mimosa caught in her skirt and tore it from top to bottom; but she did not pause. In an instant she was out of sight. There was nothing, when John-Ferdinand passed the next winding, but the tiny rag of white muslin with its blue bow hanging from a thorn to show she had been there.

That night, at ten o'clock, all the boxes and bedding had already been packed into the ox wagon, which was drawn out before the back door prepared for Rebekah's start the next morning before dawn. The yokes were laid out in order before the wagon, and the riems<sup>1</sup> hung over the side ready to inspan in the dark; and the oxen were sleeping in the kraal. The household had retired early, as they had to rise so soon; only Rebekah was still busy in her room arranging the clothes which the children would require to put on in the morning and tying up the last parcels.

When she had finished, she went to Bertie's room. Bertie had been there since before dinner, complaining of feeling unwell; and even the great thunderstorm which had burst in the afternoon had not revived her.

Rebekah opened the door very gently, fearing to

[<sup>1</sup> Riems: Raw hide thongs.]

awake her if she had dropped asleep. But Bertie was kneeling on the floor in the middle of the room, a large box open before her and a candle balanced on one corner; while Griet, with much alacrity, was adding the contents of the lowest drawer in the chest to the pile of clothes that lay on the floor at Bertie's side. Bertie was putting the articles one by one into the box.

Rebekah set down her candle on the dressing-table and walked up to her, looking down with astonishment. Bertie did not look up, but went on mechanically fitting the articles in.

"Bertie, what is this?" Rebekah asked.

She did not look up. "I am going with you," she said shortly, in a voice almost low and gruff; and went on packing. Her face was turned downwards; her lips looked heavy and protruding; but there was no sign of her having wept.

Rebekah put her hand on Bertie's arm: "How is this, Bertie? What is it?"

"I am going with you." There was a dull, dogged persistency in the tone.

"But does mother know of this?"

"I am going with you."

Griet, who had just added the very last article of the drawer to the heap on the floor, stood with her eyes rolling and glittering, delighted with the general confusion and the excitement of something unusual happening, though she did not understand what. Rebekah sent her out to go to her bed. When the door was closed, she knelt down beside Bertie.

"What is the matter, my dear one? You have always said you would not leave the farm or go with me, when I have asked you. Has anything happened?"

Bertie said nothing; her heavy face was still turned down. There flashed on Rebekah the remembrance of John-Ferdinand's white stiff face all that day.

"My darling, is there anything I can do to help you? Anything I can say?"

"Go and tell mother I am going with you," she said

slowly. "Make her understand I am going. I *will* go."

Rebekah stood up, but bent down again, putting one hand on her shoulder. "There is nothing I might say to John-Ferdinand, which could be of any use to you, is there?"

In an instant Bertie had leapt to her feet and caught both Rebekah's hands in hers.

"Oh, no, no!—Rebekah, promise me—you will never—never speak to him of me—never ask him about me—never ask him anything! Promise me, Rebekah!—Promise me!"

For the only time in her life Rebekah saw Bertie transfixed with passion.

"I will do whatever you ask of me, dear one."

Bertie sank back again on her knees before the box, and Rebekah went out to see the father and the little mother in their bedroom, and tell them of Bertie's resolve. The little mother, who had been half-asleep, woke up and began to whine that it was all so sudden; that she could not bear sudden things; that Bertie had no clothes; that she ought to have told them before; that it was unlike Bertie to take people so by surprise. But when Rebekah had explained that the new clothes could be better got in Cape Town; that the little mother had always wished her to go with her for a visit; that Bertie needed change and ought to see something of life after twenty years on the farm; and when the father had expressed his full approval of her going, the little mother, still whimpering, insisted on getting up and going to see Bertie; but gave her consent. Bertie gave her as little explanation as she had given Rebekah. She only said stolidly she was going. And the little mother was at last persuaded by Rebekah to go back to her bedroom, still whimpering that she couldn't bear surprises; that she wouldn't have wondered if it had been Rebekah, but that Bertie took after her and never took anyone by surprise; that perhaps after all Bertie took after her father also; and she had no child who

really resembled her ! But she had no valid objection to make ; when Rebekah had bid her good-night and she found the father was asleep and she had no one to hear her, she got quietly into bed and was soon asleep.

When Rebekah had helped Bertie to pack all her things and they had strapped the last box, it was nearly twelve o'clock. They had spoken only of the work they were busied with. When all was done, Rebekah put her arm softly about Bertie and drew her head on to her breast.

" There is nothing you would like to tell me, Bertie ? "

" No, nothing. " She almost drew herself from her sister ; who, when she had helped her to undress, went to her own room for a few hours' rest, before the early start.

At half-past three the next morning the driver came and knocked at all doors and bedroom windows to rouse them, and everyone lit candles and got up.

It was still absolutely dark outside. The men were at the kraal, sorting out the oxen, and old Ayah stood before the kitchen fire, drawing her little yellow handkerchief tighter about her shoulders, and watching the flame and smoke go up about the kettle, and saying, " Oh, ja, Heere ! " partly because she wanted to persuade herself she was quite wide awake, and partly because it was so chilly. Under the dining-room table Griet, who had just awakened, was sitting upright on the skin on which she slept and rubbing her eyes and blubbing, partly with cold and sleepiness, and partly because old Ayah had told her that Bertie was going away for six months.

When old Ayah had made the coffee and put it on the dining-room table, they began to file in one by one, and stood round the table drinking it and making believe to eat dried biscuit ;—the father in his great overcoat with the collar turned up ; the little mother in her dressing-gown with a shawl over her head ; Rebekah in her travelling dress with a large white

kappie; while Griet, on the bench in the corner, sat holding Rebekah's baby, the two boys having been already carried out fast asleep to their bed in the wagon. Then Veronica came in, fully dressed in her starched gown, with collar and cuffs, her hair smooth and the braids coiled carefully at the back, and a pale blue scarf over her shoulders pinned up neatly at one side. They stood round the table drinking the coffee and eating the biscuit, almost in silence. Only Baby-Bertie and John-Ferdinand were not yet there.

As Bertie came out of her bedroom into the long passage she saw John-Ferdinand come out of his room. It was almost dark at her end of the passage, and she stood still, thinking he would pass on to the dining-room without noticing her. But he saw her and came up the passage towards her. She drew herself close to the wall as if to let him pass, but he stopped when he reached her.

"Bertie," he said, standing near her, and speaking in a slow even voice, "I fear you may think I dealt very hardly with you yesterday. If you feel that, by my expressing my love for you and showing it as I have done, I have at all committed myself to you, I am still willing to marry you, if you feel that I should do so! My poor cousin!"

"Oh no!" she said in a quick, thick voice. "No! no! no!" Holding her skirt that it might not touch him, she ran down the passage to the dining-room, and John-Ferdinand passed slowly out through the dark front room and round to the back of the house where the wagon was standing.

A little later they were all gathered about the kitchen doorsteps to say good-bye. The light streamed in a great square from the door. Rebekah said good-bye and climbed into the wagon to take her baby. The father folded Bertie in his great arms and kissed her eyes and her mouth. The little mother cried and reminded her of some of the clothing she ought to buy for herself as soon as she got to Cape Town. Old Ayah and Griet



caught hold of her at the same time, both crying; then Veronica, standing in the middle of the doorway, held both Bertie's hands fast in hers and looked full into her face. "I hope," she said, "you will have a happy, a very happy, time in Cape Town. I shall do all I can to fill your place to your dear father and mother. Come back soon!"

Bertie drew her hands from her and went down the steps.

John-Ferdinand stood in the dark beside the oven. Bertie would have walked quickly by him and got into the wagon, but he stepped forward and put into her hand a hand as cold as hers. Then the father helped her to climb in, and the driver clapped his whip and called aloud to the oxen, and slowly the great wagon began to roll away in the dark. Bertie flung herself down on the bed beside the children and buried her face in a pillow; but Rebekah moved to the back of the wagon and sat leaning against the back plank. As the wagon rounded the kraal she could still see in the bright square of light at the kitchen doorway her father and mother, and Griet and old Ayah standing at the foot of the steps and Veronica standing full in the door, and John-Ferdinand slowly mounting the steps to go in. Then the house passed out of sight. Half an hour later, as the wagon was climbing the nek, Rebekah, who still sat looking out at the back, could see in the first grey breaks of dawn the farmhouse glimmering as a white speck among the peaceful orange trees. But Bertie still lay with her face buried in the pillow, as though she were sleeping heavily.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In those days there was no railway in the Eastern Province, and persons going to Cape Town were obliged to make the whole journey overland by wagon or cart, taking several weeks; or they might travel by wagon or cart as far as the Bay (Port Elizabeth) and take the steamer round the coast to Cape Town. Even by this route a journey such as Rebekah's would take twelve days or fourteen.

## CHAPTER V

### JOHN-FERDINAND SHOWS VERONICA HIS NEW HOUSE

THE old farm was curiously quiet after Bertie and Rebekah went.

Veronica tried to fill Bertie's place: she poured out the tea and coffee at table, and got the mother to show her how to make bread, and even went to the milk-room at night to skim the milk; but she was so curiously still in all her movements that the house seemed quiet and empty.

Griet resented bitterly her attempts to fill Bertie's place. Why should she sit in Miss Bertie's chair, attend to Miss Bertie's flowers, and even move into Miss Bertie's bedroom? And Griet, as far as she was able, took care it did not go well with the bread-making; and flower-gardening did not prosper as in Baby-Bertie's time.

In the afternoon, when she was sent out by Veronica to water the flowers, after working for a little while she would carefully peer through the stems of the orange trees and look up and down the orchard; and if she saw no one coming, she would kneel down quickly and, producing from her little yellow print sleeve a sharp table knife, would slip it under the sod at the root of some balsam or larkspur or brilliantly coloured four-o'clock and cut the stem off two inches below the surface. The next day when Veronica came to inspect the garden she found it drooping, and a day or two after Griet was ordered to pull it up and throw it away.

When Veronica asked her what she thought was the cause of the flowers withering, she always fixed her twinkling black eyes on Veronica's face and said, "Worms, worms!"—a reply which satisfied Veronica, who in her ignorance of gardening did not note it as remarkable that only the annuals died, while the perennials, which would still be there when Bertie returned in six months, were left untouched. Also, why Veronica's bread never rose, and why it sometimes had a strong taste of garlic, and she had at last to leave it for old Ayah to make, was a mystery Veronica never fathomed.

John-Ferdinand had left the farm the day after Bertie and Rebekah went, to go to the next little up-country town to get workmen and material for enlarging and repairing the house on his farm, and also to buy some furniture for it. If he regretted purchasing it, there was now no way left of getting rid of his bargain.

At the end of ten days he returned to his farm; but to everyone's surprise, though it was only a half-hour's ride on horseback from the old farm, he never came over. It was as though he had no wish to see the place. When he wanted the father's advice on any matter, he sent over a boy with a letter; or he asked him to come over and see him.

At last one afternoon, when he had been on his new farm over five weeks, John-Ferdinand drove over to ask the father's advice about using the dredger to enlarge his dam.

His aunt insisted on his staying to supper, and when it was over, as it was already late and there was no moon, he slept the night there.

The little mother, who was much concerned at his loneliness at his new farm and the fact that he had only a Kaffir cook, begged him to come over often; and after that night his visits were not infrequent. He generally drove over in the evening, when his day's work of superintendence was ended, and had supper with them. After supper the father went to his books,

and then to bed; and as the little mother often could not sit out on the stoep on account of her neuralgic-headaches, and as the evenings were now too hot to sit indoors, John-Ferdinand and Veronica often sat on the stoep alone.

Sometimes they talked of England and the places they had both been to; oftener, as they sat in the half-darkness, he recited passages from Young's *Night Thoughts* or Keble's Hymns, which Veronica said she admired much; and sometimes they sat quiet and rested.

After a time it became almost a rule that he should drive over in the evenings, and sleep at the old farm, returning to his own early in the mornings; and on Sunday he always came and spent the whole day. In that way, as the little mother said, he got at least one good meal a day, and it was a break in the solitary monotony of his life. She told him to bring over all his darning and mending; and, as she was generally busy, Veronica did it for him.

One night, about three months after Bertie had gone, he asked the mother if she would drive over with him to his farm the next morning and help him hang his curtains, and give him advice about arranging the china and linen, which had just arrived from England, and which he had ordered before he bought the farm, in view of his marriage with Bertie.

The little mother said she could not go, as it was baking day, but that, if Veronica would go, she would send over two of the best of the Kaffir maids to help her in arranging the things; and the next morning Veronica drove over with John-Ferdinand.

They came back in the evening just as it was getting dark, and for three days running Veronica went to help him.

The next time the little mother wrote the weekly letter to Rebekah, she said:

"There is generally no news to give you from this dull place, but to-night there is great news, that will very much surprise you.

"Veronica Grey went over with John-Ferdinand to help him to arrange his house for several days, and, when they came back last night, after supper he told me and your father he wished to speak with us, and he told us he had asked Veronica to marry him, and that they were engaged and would be married in a few weeks. I was surprised, though your father did not seem to be; I think nothing surprises him. I am very glad about it. It was lonely for him there; and it will be very nice to have relations there. Veronica has been very good trying to help me since Bertie left, and I feel almost as if she were my daughter! Tell Bertie; I know she will be glad.

"John-Ferdinand has seemed ill and depressed during the last months. It's living alone there, and not getting proper food. It will be so good for him to have her to take care of him. Her health is much better now; her cough is almost gone; you would hardly know her, she looks so bright. She is not much of a housekeeper; her bread always turns out bad, and the flower garden hasn't done well since she looked after it; but she is well off and they will always be able to have good servants and need not trouble much about the farming. They seem made for each other.

"It will be very nice for Bertie, when she comes home, to have them so near for company. Tell her her hand-lamb of last year, which has been running with the sheep, has got two lambs. I hope the air is suiting her better than you said it did at first. I will write to her next week. I will make you the biltong as soon as it gets cooler. I feel so excited still about the engagement I can hardly write."

Six weeks afterwards Veronica Grey and John-Ferdinand were married. Veronica said there was no need to wait for letters from England, as she knew her mother would be delighted to hear of her marriage; and if she were married at once she could help John-Ferdinand to get the house and farm quite

straight. The clergyman came from the town and they were quietly married at the old farm, and Veronica promised the little mother when she said good-bye that they would come over every Sunday and spend the day with her. As the cart drove away with them to their farm, the little mother cried, she hardly knew why; but Griet shouted hurrah and tossed up her little skirts, and then turned round and round like a dervish, till you could see nothing but a whirl of yellow skirts and two little spindle legs; and the little mother left off crying and told her not to make such a spectacle of herself.

## CHAPTER VI

### - HOW BABY-BERTIE WENT A-DANCING

TUCKED away among the great oak avenues in the suburbs of Cape Town was Rebekah's home. You might ride mile after mile on a hot summer's day and never feel the sunshine on you, for the great oak trees met over your head; and here and there to the right and left were houses buried behind hedges, with trees touching the roofs, and verandas, and flower gardens.

Everywhere was the scent of fir trees; and pine plantations stretched away up the mountain sides; and now and then there were vineyards stretching acre on acre, with the sunlight shimmering through their leaves, and with white and purple grapes kissing the ground. Behind all rose the mountain's side, sloping away towards the Devil's Peak. On sunny days, as you looked up at it, it seemed as though that side of the mountain were a giant, tranquilly leaning backwards and watching with great godlike, placid eyes the pine woods and the dwellings of men curled about his feet.

It was very peaceful in the great avenues. Sometimes carts drove along and foot-passengers walked there; in summer the acorns fell, and in winter the leaves strewed the side-walks, and the beautiful tracery of the bare oak branches showed against the clear blue sky, and the lovely green of the pines and of the flower gardens seemed the brighter because the oak trees were bare.

In the houses at night you always heard the trees everywhere rustling with a sound like the distant

moaning of a sea. Yet, if you entered a train at one of the little stations, in half an hour or a little more you might be on the other side of the mountain and in the old seaport town itself, with its long streets, principally of single-storied houses, but also here and there of double, with small-paned windows, much as the old Dutch loved to build a hundred years ago. In the streets were Malays; and fish carts blowing their horns; and Dutchmen, and Englishmen, and men of all nations and colours and mixtures; and in the side streets were little Malay and coloured children playing happily in the gutters before their doors, or sitting on the stoep steps with a bunch of grapes in the one hand and a lump of bread in the other; and everywhere the peaceful, sleepy life of the old South African town crept on slowly; with its open drains, and its old families, and its old quiet methods of business, still prevailing. And above it all towered the stupendous front of Table Mountain, its beetling crags seeming to look down always with a stern calm contempt on the little seething world of men below.

Round the Peninsula swept the Southern Sea, pale blue and deep green in fair weather, and black in storms; but always, whether in storm or in fair weather, restless and passionate as no other sea on earth is—the Cape of Storms.

Rebekah's house was divided from the avenue by a tall hedge of blue plumbago, so high you saw no one that was passing in the avenue beyond, except it might be their heads, if they were very tall. It was a small house, two great oak trees that grew in the back yard overhanging its roof; and before it was a little flower garden always brilliant with flowers both in summer and winter; and there was a small veranda between two jutting-out wing rooms. Under the windows ran a little rockery; and on the left side of the garden was a little rose hedge of monthly roses almost always in bloom, which Rebekah had planted when she first came to live there.



Across the rose hedge was a large house with a rough grass lawn and some oak trees growing around it; and in the rose hedge was a small gate which Frank had had put there a year after they were married, as people they knew lived next door, and he wanted a passage between the houses.

It was to this little house among the trees that Rebekah brought Baby-Bertie; and gave her as bedroom the left-wing room, with a green wall-paper, which looked out into the flower garden.

But for a long time after she came Bertie seemed to take no interest in anything. She had no wish to see the people and the sights of the town; and for most part of the day she sat in the iron rocking-chair on the verandah, watching the flower garden indifferently; she did not even notice the parrot swinging himself above her and calling to her from the cage over her head; and the needlework she had brought out lay often untouched in her lap all the morning.

When Frank came home at evening with his laughter and talk, it did not rouse her. Sometimes he brought men in for a game of billiards in the billiard-room at the back of the house. Sometimes they had supper at eleven, and came out afterwards to sit on the veranda and smoke; but Bertie generally slipped away to bed, and seemed to feel no interest in them. She, who had always been fastidious about her clothes, and as a little child had loved bright ribbons and shoes, now often wore one white dress till it was frowsy and tumbled. Rebekah had never asked her for an explanation of her sudden desire to leave the farm and come with her, nor had she ever offered one; and the name of John-Ferdinand was never mentioned between them. In her heart Rebekah did not grieve if any misunderstanding had separated her cousin from her sister.

Rebekah, who had only one little coloured maid to help her, was generally too busy with her household work and children to have much time to spend with her; but she brought her cups of soup and plates of

fruit; and she bought her material to make new dresses, but Bertie put them away in a drawer without troubling to make them. Now and then a neighbour who had rooms in the large house across the little rose hedge came over through the little gate and brought her fancy work, and sat on the veranda with Bertie and talked to her. She was a Mrs. Drummond, a little slight woman, with so long a neck and waist that when she sat, or until she stood beside another woman, she looked almost tall. She was always beautifully dressed; whatever she wore was graceful and was perfectly thought out. If she changed her scarf or waistcoat, she changed also her breast-pin and earrings to match them; she was as thoughtfully dressed in the morning, in a cotton wrap with little moonstones set in dull silver in her ears, as in the afternoon, when she wore Indian muslin and lace, or in the evening, when she wore delicate Chinese silks and little diamond stars for earrings. Even her little drawing-room was softly draped in Indian silks or Oriental tapestries in a way other people's were not; there was not a hard outline or bare corner. The curtains at the window were tied back with gold filigree work that matched the brown and gold wall-paper, and her little real China tea-cups matched her own slippers, and both harmonised with the Indian footstool on which she rested her feet. If you picked up in the avenue a bow she had dropped from her dress, you might have guessed it must be hers from its graceful limp fall. Other women tried to imitate her dresses and the draperies of her little drawing-room, but they never made their things look quite as hers did.

She was not pretty, but she was too graceful to be plain. Her hair was neither dark nor light; and she had large white teeth which some people said were false, and some real, and which she always showed when she smiled, as she did continually, with a sudden short movement of her upper lip, which moved alone, while the rest of the face was at rest, as though it were mechanically drawn up and then suddenly let down

again. Her face was oblong, and was long, like her neck and her body; and she generally preferred to sit instead of standing and walking, when it was possible, because her long neck and waist made her look more tall and graceful, when the shortness of her legs was hidden. She often sat leaning a little forward, with her hands drooping over the edge of her lap, and with her head very slightly on one side, as that showed the outline of her chin, which she knew was the best point about her.

She had come to the Cape from England with her husband two years before Rebekah was married; but he had gone to travel in the interior of Africa, while she had remained in Cape Town; he had gone on from Central Africa to India and Burmah and the Far East, and had never come back during the seven years.

When Mrs. Drummond first came, men had been very attentive to her, and women had imitated her dress and manners much. Now, the men who knew her began often to discuss her at their Club and in their smoking-rooms; she had said she was twenty-eight years old when she came, and she was twenty-eight still; and they sometimes speculated as to when she would have another birthday, and as to whether the huge coil of hair at the back of her head were real or artificial; and they mimicked her little mannerisms; but the women still copied her dresses, though not quite so much as at first; and both men and women came to the croquet parties she gave on the lawn of the large house, part of which she had hired. She went to dances and receptions, and at dances still got partners, though not so many as at first; and young girls and older women still thought that if Mrs. Drummond wore or did anything, it must be "the right style." Sometimes the men made jokes about her husband's long absence ribaldly, and the women now and then discussed it seriously; but, on the whole, it attracted little attention; it had come about so gradually. She had always said he was coming back in six months, or in

eight, or next year (she said so still), and she showed handsome silks and embroideries she said he sent her from the East, and she told the women he wrote to her every week and was always longing to come back to her; so people never found the matter of great interest.

She had known Rebekah's husband before he married; she and her husband had come out in the same steamer, when he was returning from a visit to Europe; and it was she who had chosen the little house next door for him, when he had determined to marry, and helped him to furnish it. They were both musical, and sung in the same glee club, and had belonged to the same church choir; but at the time Bertie came they did not see much of each other. He had left the choir, and he laughed as other men did about the twenty-eight years and the large unchanging coil of fair hair at the back of her head; and the little gate that he had had put in the rose hedge, that he might go over more easily to practise his music with her, was now almost unused, and the grass grew in the path.

But as soon as Bertie came she called and offered to come and sit with her as she so seldom went out; and almost every afternoon she tripped over with the little silk bag over her arm; the bag varied to match each costume, and in it she carried the fancy work she was always doing for church bazaars. Sometimes she chatted to Bertie about her work, and told her about the bazaars; and sometimes she told her of her friends in England, her father a retired army officer, and their little place in the country; and sometimes she talked of the presents her husband sent her from the Far East, and what a clever man he was. She said he had a whole box full of manuscripts, that he wouldn't print just because he didn't care to, or he might have made a heap of money; but generally she talked of dresses and the prices of things in the shops in Cape Town; and now and then she told some gossip about people Bertie had never seen, why some lady was never called on, or how a certain young girl was getting herself

talked about. But generally she talked of more trivial matters. Rebekah never came out and sat with them while she was there, but sent them out tea and cake. And Bertie would sit still listening to her. Often Mrs. Drummond stayed so late that when Frank came home in the evening she was still sitting there.

One afternoon, when she had just left, and Bertie sat with her hands crossed on her work and one little foot with its slipper half off dragging under the rocking-chair, her brother-in-law opened the garden gate and came up towards the steps. Rebekah had heard him and had come to the front door to meet him. She had always met him there in the first days of their marriage, when he had called out from the gate, "Where is Goody-two-shoes?" and whistled for her; and now, when he did not call or whistle, she still met him there every day when she heard the click of the gate and the step on the gravel. As he gave her his bag in the doorway he said, "Great news! What do you think! The immaculate John-Ferdinand writes he is to be married to a Miss Veronica Grey, a lady who was staying at the farm for her health. He says you know her. John married!" he laughed.

As Rebekah took his bag from him she glanced round at Bertie; she was sitting bolt upright and looking out over the flower garden. Rebekah drew him in; but Bertie heard him laughing from the dining-room, "I wonder whether he proposed to her, or she to him!—the saintly John!"

When Rebekah went on to the veranda again she found Bertie gone, and only her slipper lying under the rocking-chair.

When supper-time came Bertie did not appear, having gone to her room feeling unwell, she said, and the next day was so unwell that Rebekah sent for a doctor, who said she was suffering from anæmia and must take rest and a tonic; and for some weeks she lay about eating little, seldom even sitting on the veranda to be talked to by Mrs. Drummond, but lying on a sofa Rebekah had

placed there for her, often seeming half asleep. She even discontinued the short weekly notes she had been in the habit of writing home. Rebekah took care that John-Ferdinand's engagement was never mentioned before her, and she wished she could have prevented her receiving the little mother's letters, which were always full of news of preparations for the marriage.

Then came the news of John-Ferdinand's wedding. The little mother's letters were full of it : and Rebekah watched Bertie anxiously. But a strange change came over her. She lolled about no more. She seemed suddenly to wake up from a sleep. She was suddenly always active and restless. She laughed, and talked, and romped wildly with the children, whom she had hardly noticed before. She began making the dresses, the material for which Rebekah had bought her when she first came. Sometimes she suddenly insisted on turning out a whole room and shaking the carpets and washing the windows herself; and then she would rush over to Mrs. Drummond's to get advice about trimming a new hat. When she came back she would begin weeding a flower-bed, or go into the kitchen to make a cake. She seemed able to do anything except to rest quietly or be alone. When her dresses were made, Mrs. Drummond insisted on her coming to her croquet parties and introduced her to people. Soon invitations came to her for dinner-parties and dances, and, as Rebekah did not go out, she went under Mrs. Drummond's care or with Frank; and Mrs. Drummond taught her to dance. After a time the invitations became so numerous that she was always busy getting a new dress ready or repairing an old one, and seemed to live in a low fever of excitement. Frank took her to concerts and entertainments, and was proud of the attention his pretty sister-in-law awakened everywhere.

One evening, a little more than two months after the marriage, Bertie, who was going to a whist party with Mrs. Drummond, knelt partly undressed on the floor before her sister with her back turned to her,

that Rebekah might arrange her hair for her. All the while she talked restlessly about the dress Mrs. Drummond was going to wear that night, and about the way she was going to change the old wedding dress which Rebekah had given her into a dancing skirt for herself. Suddenly in the midst of her talk she glanced round. "Rebekah, aren't you laughing at me? You think me so foolish!" She turned herself round and clasped her large beautifully shaped white arms round Rebekah's little body. "I talk of nothing but dressing and dancing! You must think me so foolish!—but, Rebekah, when you want to forget anything, you can read and think; you are so clever—and you have your children—I—I am so stupid—I can't help it!" She laid her head against Rebekah's breast and nestled to her like a little child. Rebekah pressed her lips on the bare white shoulder. "Rebekah, you will not let me go back to the farm? You will keep me here?" she said quickly. "I can never go back; I won't go back!—Never! Never! Promise me! Promise me!" Then, giving Rebekah no time to reply, she sprang up and ran away to her own room to finish dressing.

That was the first and last time at which, either then or afterwards, to any human being Bertie ever referred directly or indirectly to John-Ferdinand's relation with herself.

When three months more had passed, Bertie had had three proposals of marriage. One was from a very wealthy young man, whose estate adjoined a tiny fruit farm Rebekah had bought a few miles out in the country, and who had seen Bertie walking in the vineyard with Rebekah's children, and who had found out where she lived and got an introduction to her. Another was from an English officer whom she had met at Mrs. Drummond's, who was spending two months at the Cape on his way to India, and who asked her to marry him the fourth time he saw her; and one was from a young beardless, penniless, civil servant, whom she had danced with once or twice. Bertie

refused them all. Frank and Mrs. Drummond both thought her very foolish to refuse the English officer, who had appealed to both to further his suit, and who was a man with a large private income, of an aristocratic English family, and a first-rate fellow. But the only suitor who seemed to concern Bertie at all was the young civil servant. She cried when she told Rebekah how miserable he looked when she refused him, and said she would not go to dances any more, if dancing with people made them miserable; but her restlessness and dislike of being quiet or alone soon made her go again.

At this time there came a letter from John-Ferdinand saying he and his wife were coming for a short visit to Cape Town, as they had taken no honeymoon when they were married, and asking Rebekah to take rooms for them in the large house next door, in which Mrs. Drummond also had her rooms, and where John-Ferdinand had himself stayed when in Cape Town before.

Rebekah took the rooms; but when John-Ferdinand and his wife came, she and Bertie with the children had gone to her little fruit and vine farm, and only the servants were in the house, as Frank also was away up-country on a shooting trip.

This little farm Rebekah had bought two years after her marriage, partly with the money her father had given her as her wedding gift, and partly she had paid for it by placing a bond on it. Her husband had laughed loudly at first at the idea of her buying and farming it, but as they were married by ante-nuptial contract and he was not responsible for her debts, and as he was never much interested in any matter which did not immediately concern himself, he did not interfere.

Now he rather approved of it, as it saved the expense of taking the children to the seaside when they needed change, and supplied the household with fruit and vegetables free of charge. Rebekah kept an old



German and his wife there to look after it with the help of a coloured boy, and drove out herself when she had half a day to spare; and when her husband went away, as he often did, for hunting or fishing expeditions, she took the children and stayed there till he came back. She herself had helped to mend the roof of the old cottage and to plaster and whitewash the walls, and with her own hands had planted and grafted trees and vines. She liked the labour in the open air, and she was studying books on wine-making so that if in time she were able to buy two vineyards adjoining she could make wine.

During the first days Veronica and John-Ferdinand spent much of their time sight-seeing, as she had never visited Cape Town before; but he introduced her to Mrs. Drummond, and in the mornings, which he generally spent walking in the pine woods with his book, after the first days Veronica was invited by Mrs. Drummond to sit in her private drawing-room with her and work and drink coffee at eleven. They were unlike physically and mentally, but they had tastes which harmonised. While Veronica sat upright on a high-backed chair knitting heavy squares for a bed quilt, Mrs. Drummond on a low settee, with her head a little on one side, chose carefully the shades of silk for an altar-cloth which she was making. They discussed their work and the prices of things in Cape Town shops; and Mrs. Drummond chirped continually the news of the place, especially the house over the way, and Veronica listened. She said that when Rebekah was married she went out at first a great deal with her husband to dances and entertainments and dinners, but after about a year and a half gave it all up and never went out visiting any more. She said she never entertained now except little men's suppers which she cooked herself for the men who came sometimes to play billiards with her husband in the evenings and to which she never asked women or sat down herself. She said it was so strange, she thought, that they should have a

billiard table, when they had such a small house otherwise and kept only one servant and a stable-boy. She believed Rebekah had paid for the building of the billiard-room herself. She had had it done while her husband had been away on a long business trip—the contractor who had built it had re-papered her bedroom and had himself told her that Rebekah had paid for the room as a surprise to her husband. Mrs. Drummond supposed it was to keep him at home she built it. She said women didn't seem to care for Rebekah—she didn't think a woman had called there for over a year; she thought many of them didn't even know she existed, as she never went to church. She said she thought men cared for her as little as women; she had never seen a man call there, except when her husband was at home. It seemed so strange to her that Rebekah should have gone away to the farm with Bertie and the children just when she knew Veronica was coming, and looked inquiringly over her silks at Veronica.

Veronica said Rebekah was always strange.

Mrs. Drummond said, Yes, she was; she used to dig in her garden with a big spade where people could see her quite well over the gate; she had heard someone say that when she was out at her farm they had seen her climb up a ladder right on to the roof, mending a smoky chimney.

Veronica said some people were born with those mannish ways. It was not Rebekah's mother's fault, as she was quite a sweet womanly woman.

Mrs. Drummond also had much to tell of Bertie; of how dull she had seemed when she first came, and how she had improved. She told of her dancing and her dresses, and about the English officer (Bertie had not told her of her two other suitors), and she said she liked Bertie better than Rebekah.

Veronica said she thought she liked Rebekah the better of the two, though she was so strange, and not always very nice and womanly in her ways. She said

it seemed to her that Bertie always cared too much to attract men's attention.

Mrs. Drummond drew her upper lip up sharply and held her head a little more on a side. She said some people couldn't help attracting men's attention; and she looked very sideways with her eyes at Veronica's square shoulders and the flat foot showing below her plain skirt. She said one wondered how some women ever got married at all: but Veronica was looking down at her own square of bed-quilt.

Mrs. Drummond said she thought a woman ought to take care of her appearance; that Rebekah had worn the same old brown silk dress for three years whenever she went out shopping to town, only altering it a little every year as the fashions changed, that it might not look too striking. She said a woman who could afford to build a billiard-room ought to dress better. They spent all the mornings together.

Sometimes in the afternoon they went into town shopping together also; and, when they did not, they all three had tea under the oak trees on the lawn out of Mrs. Drummond's delicate little china cups, unless it was her croquet afternoon.

At last, the last day came of their visit to Cape Town. Then Veronica proposed to her husband that they should go and look at Rebekah's house and garden. She said the little mother would be so disappointed if they came back and could tell her nothing about it. John-Ferdinand felt sure his brother and sister-in-law would not object, and they walked over. They paced about Rebekah's little garden; the front door was not locked, and they went in. John-Ferdinand sat down in the drawing-room at the table to look at some books, and Veronica went to inspect the house. The stable-boy was away exercising the horses and the servant girl resting in her room across the yard, and Veronica passed alone from room to room. In the dining-room she noted the things on the mantelpiece and the side-board, and Rebekah's work-basket and sewing-machine

on the table in the corner; she examined Rebekah's bedroom, and the things on the dressing-table and washing-stand, and Frank's little dressing-room that opened from it, with its large dressing-table and new carpet and comfortable easy chair; she went through to the children's bedroom opening out of Rebekah's, and tried the handle of Rebekah's little study which led out of the children's room, but that was the only place in the house which was locked. She examined the kitchen and outer pantry and the things on the shelves, and passed down the passage to the billiard-room which was built out at the left side. She examined the cues, which she had never seen before, and lifted the holland cover to look at the green cloth on the table; and went to the spare room which was now Bertie's bedroom and looked at all her dresses hanging in the wardrobe and the whole row of boots and shoes under the dressing-table, and unlocked and examined the large new dressing-case upon it with brushes and scent bottles heavily mounted in real silver, which Bertie had received through the post from some unknown admirer on her last birthday. She even went into the yard and lifted the lids of the tanks that held the water for the bathroom. When she had seen everything, she went back to the little drawing-room.

John-Ferdinand was still sitting at the table with his elbows resting on it; his head was supported by his hands; he was looking down so intently that he did not notice Veronica's soft entrance, till she had stepped up behind him and put her large cool hands over both his eyes. "Who is it?" she said with grave playfulness. He did not speak, but taking each of her hands in one of his, took them down from his eyes and resting them on his shoulders held them fast there, while he looked back up into her face.

"What are you studying so deeply?"

"Only this," he said, glancing down.

It was not a book that was open before him, but an album of photographs. On the page before him was

a picture of Bertie which had just been taken at the request of her father and mother. Mrs. Drummond, who had gone with Bertie to have it taken, had insisted it should be in full evening dress, that her beautiful arms and shoulders might show. The photographer also had tried to make what he believed to be an effective picture. He had turned her head a little over her shoulder and raised her chin, so that the lovely lines of the neck and upturned chin were not lost. He had put in her left hand a bunch of artificial flowers, which she held against her breast, and he had required her to draw her lips into a smile. The picture resembled an imaginary type of beauty in a book of engravings rather than Bertie. The simplicity and directness of pose and manner, amounting almost to awkwardness, which was the character of her beauty, were lost.

Veronica looked down at the book over his shoulder.

"It is very finely taken; is it not?" she said. "How well they take portraits here!"

He looked down at the face too. "It's very handsome, and just like her!"

He loosened one of her hands, and with his right drew her to his side and made her kneel down beside him. He turned to her and took her face softly between both his hands and looked down into it—

' And learn how pure,  
How sweet can be,  
My own wife's face '

he said softly.

A faint flush rose into Veronica's cheeks as he looked down into her face. He put one arm round her shoulders and drew her nearer to him.

"My wife," he said, "I want to confess something to you."

But then he was silent. She crossed her hands upon his knees and looked up at him: "What is it, my husband?"

His hand rested again on the side of the album; he was looking down at it.

"I told you once," he said, "on that day on the farm when we became engaged, that I had once been much attracted by my young cousin, but that we had had a difference, and I felt I could not marry her. But one thing I never told you—that, after she left the farm, she was always with me. Wherever I went I seemed to see her. I dared not come to the old place because it reminded me of her. At last I wrote a letter telling her I could not live without her, and asking her to come back and marry me.—That evening, when I rode over to her father's farm, for the first time after she had left, I came over partly that I might give it to the boy who was going to the town the next morning to post.—But you were so kind to me that evening—do you remember?—We sat out on the stoep, and I repeated that passage of Tennyson's to you that you liked so. It seemed to rest me to be with you, as if I got rid of her face as I saw it last look at me. And somehow, I did not post the letter that night, though it was in my pocket.—Looking back now, though I didn't realise it at the time, I am sure it was your influence upon me that kept me from sending it."

"Yes, dear!" she said.

"But, do you know, I did not destroy that letter? For weeks still I kept it in my pocket, and at any moment it might have been sent.—Then came that day when you came over to my farm to help me put things right in my house. Even then I still always had the feeling that perhaps I was getting that house ready for her.—But, darling, you know what happened that afternoon when we stood together on the back veranda? I never can quite understand it. It seemed as though some power stronger than myself were drawing me to you—and my arms were about you, and your head was on my breast, and you were to be my wife, before I knew! That night, when I went to my bedroom, I burnt the letter.—But, Veronica, my wife, do you know, that even since that time, that face has come in between you and me?"—he raised the palm of his

hand from Bertie's portrait.—“ At night I have dreamed of it; the scent of geraniums and the sight of plumbago flowers have brought it back to me, even the darkness of the night has brought it to me. It has been a white face with great innocent eyes—a child's face, that I have always seen.—It has mingled with all our life together at the farm. When I saw the sheep come out of the kraal in the morning with the dew on their backs—when I saw the thorn trees, or smelt an evening flower, a kind of sudden trembling has come over me.—Even when you first proposed we should come here for our holiday, you know how I resisted you? And still more when you proposed we should stay here in this house near to them—I felt I could not see her—could not be near her—and yet deep in my heart I knew it was best; that I must see her again, or the spell would never be broken.” He looked down at the portrait, half of which his hand covered. “ Even since I have been here and I have heard from you how she has devoted herself to pleasure, even when you told me of her flirtation with that English military man for whom she yet cared nothing—it made no difference to me. But now—when I look at that—all is gone!” He raised his hand and dropped it again on the face of the picture. “ When I see *that*, I know it has all been an idle dream! She could never really have been mine—never been anything to me. Never have been what you are—

‘ What have I done  
That God should choose a wife for me ? ’ ”

He bent down over her. “ My darling wife! Look up at me!”

Veronica raised her eyes to his, and pressed her head close to his breast.

“ Do you forgive me, my darling ? ”

She drew his head down with her hand so that his cheek rested on her hair; and then they heard the maid-servant coming into the passage, and Veronica rose to

her feet to explain to her how it was they were there.

Late that night, when Veronica and John-Ferdinand lay in bed in the large room in the boarding-house, the wind was blowing through the pine trees and among the oak trees in the avenue, making them crack their great branches and tap the roofs of the houses. It was just a quarter to one when John-Ferdinand woke and lay listening to the wind; then on the other side of the large bed he heard Veronica move.

"Are you awake?" he asked.

"I have not yet been asleep," she said.

He stretched out his arm and drew her a little nearer to him.

"You are not troubling about anything I told you this afternoon, Beloved! You know it is all past?"

"Oh yes!" she said.

He drew her closer to him, her head resting on his shoulder, his arm passing under her neck.

"You trust me utterly?"

"Oh yes! my dear one." They both lay looking upwards in the dark, and heard the wind tearing at the branches of the trees.

"There is *nothing* troubling you, my dear one?" He turned his face more towards her.

"No, nothing, dear—at least," she hesitated, "there is perhaps one very little thing—such a very little thing, that you will think me foolish! You must tell me if I'm wrong. You always know so much better what is right and wise than I."

"What is it, my dear one?" He put out his right hand and took her left that lay on the white coverlet.

She spoke slowly, lisping a little as a child might, talking to its mother: "It's such a little thing—such a small thing—but, you know, ever since we were married it has sometimes made me a little sad, I've felt as if you didn't *quite* trust me!"

"What is it?—There is nothing I know, or feel, or think I would not share with you!"



"Oh, it's only a little thing!—I've wondered sometimes," she murmured softly, "why you didn't tell me what you and Bertie quarrelled about! You told me you had a difference; but you never said what it was. You didn't even tell me to-day."

He was quiet for a moment; then he said, "I did not tell you because it was a matter more hers than mine.—She did not ask me to make any promise not to repeat it—she asked nothing—but I took it that she was speaking to me in confidence. I could never have told anyone but you—but you are not someone else. You are me, myself! When I speak to you I speak within my-own soul."

"But you must not tell me anything, dear, that you would rather not. I always know that what you wish to do is right! You know better than I?"

"But I want to tell you! There shall be nothing that divides between us." He turned on his side and drew her nearer to him, so that from shoulders to feet their long straight figures lay side by side.

"The reason why I could not marry my cousin," he said, "was this"—and then he told her the story of the parlour in the bush and what Baby-Bertie told him.

Half an hour later the wind was still blowing as wildly as ever; but they lay asleep with their hands interclasped and his breath on her face.

The next day when all their trunks were strapped for starting, John-Ferdinand went to the station to call a cab. He returned sooner than he had expected, as he had met one in the avenue. As he came back into the bedroom, Veronica was sitting with her travelling cloak on, and her hat on the table beside her, bending over the dressing-table, writing. She thought it was the maid come to begin carrying things down, till he stood almost at her shoulders. She started lightly, and spread her broad hand over the page on which she was writing.

"What is it?" he asked, bending over her.

A faint tint of roses rushed into her white cheeks.

"A little surprise for you.—A secret.—Something you mustn't know about."

He stooped and pressed his cheek against her smooth head, and turned to help the maid carry down the packages.

An hour later they were driving through Cape Town on their way to the docks.

"I wish to stop at the post-office," she said. "I have a letter to post about something I forgot to order at a shop, and which I want sent on to me."

When they got to the post-office he offered to get out and post it for her: but she said she was tired of sitting and would rather get out herself, and before he could speak, had jumped out and put it in the box. The letter was addressed to Mrs. Drummond, but in a large, round hand, quite unlike her own angular small one. When she had put it in the box, they drove down to the docks, and in two hours they had sailed away to their home in the Eastern Province.

## CHAPTER VII

### RAINDROPS IN THE AVENUE

WHEN Bertie and Rebekah came back from the fruit farm, Rebekah was busy putting her house right, and no one noticed that, on the first morning she went to see Mrs. Drummond, Bertie did not stay so long as usual, nor was there any one to note that, neither on that day nor the next, nor the day after, did Mrs. Drummond come to see her.

But on the day after that, as Bertie sat sewing in the veranda, Mrs. Drummond came with her work-bag on her arm and sat in the low cane chair opposite her; and Bertie thought it must have been her own fancy which had made it seem that Mrs. Drummond had not been so glad to see her when she returned from the farm.

Mrs. Drummond said it was a fine afternoon, and made a remark about the new pattern she was tatting; and Bertie answered her; then they sat silent for a while, with the rich warm scent from Rebekah's flower garden coming up to them.

Then Mrs. Drummond said, without raising her head, that her cousin, John-Ferdinand's wife, seemed a very nice woman; Bertie said yes, and asked Mrs. Drummond if she thought it would not look better if she feather-stitched the sleeve of the baby's dress she was making. Mrs. Drummond said she thought so: and then there was quiet again with only the sound of Bertie's needle and Mrs. Drummond's shuttle and of their sleeves rustling against their sides as they worked. The parrot, who had been to sleep, woke suddenly and began throw-

ing down grains of mielies on Bertie's head. Then Mrs. Drummond drooped her head on the opposite side from the one on which it had been drooping before and said, "Did you never go to school when you were a girl?"

"No," said Bertie, without looking up, "my sister taught me out of her old books; and my mother taught me to sew."

Mrs. Drummond drooped her head lower than before, looking at her work. "So you never had any real teacher to teach you?" she said.

"No," Bertie said.—"At least," she added, hurriedly, "once—for a few months—I had a teacher."

Mrs. Drummond drooped her head yet lower.

"I suppose," she said, half glancing up, "it was a lady whom you had to teach you?"

Bertie said quickly, "No—it was a man—he did not stay long.—Don't you think that the oranges I sent you yesterday were just right for marmalade?" she added quickly.

"Yes-s," said Mrs. Drummond slowly; then she looked up fully into Bertie's face.

For a little while Bertie heard only the click of the tatting shuttle, as it turned to let the thread out, and the tick of her own needle; the scent from the flower garden seemed to come up almost overpoweringly.

"Yes, the peels of the oranges were very fine and thick," Mrs. Drummond said slowly.

"I will go and fetch you some tea," Bertie said quickly, rising; "Rebekah will have made it, by this time."

"Oh, no, thank you," Mrs. Drummond said, "I have some people coming to have tea with me, and must go at once or they will find me out."

"Oh, please do not trouble!" she said, as Bertie darted to pick up her ball of tatting cotton which had dropped from her lap as she rose. Bertie caught it and handed it to her, and she put it in her bag. "How very nice your sister's flower garden looks this afternoon—

she always seems to have more flowers and sweeter smelling than anyone else! Good-afternoon!"

Then the little figure in its large-figured Japanese silk dress fluttered across the garden and out through the gate in the rose hedge and across the lawn to the house beyond.

When Mrs. Drummond was gone Bertie sat in the rocking-chair, sewing; there was a stain of red on each cheek deeper than the red of the damask rose in Rebekah's garden; gradually it turned to pale pink and then white.

The next afternoon Mrs. Drummond had her weekly croquet party, but she did not send over to ask if Bertie was coming, and Bertie helped Rebekah to preserve the oranges they had brought, and did not go, but in the evening she went to explain why she had not been.

She found Mrs. Drummond in her bedroom before the chest of drawers, putting them neat. Mrs. Drummond did not pause in her work and hardly looked up; and when Bertie had stood beside her chatting for a little while she went away. Mrs. Drummond seemed pre-occupied. For two weeks after that she did not meet her again; then she overtook her in the avenue. Mrs. Drummond talked of some purchases she had made in Town and said good-bye at the gate. Then for a week she did not see her again. Twice Bertie had gone as far as the rose hedge, meaning to ask her whether she had not done anything to pain her; but both times she had turned back when her hand was on the gate.

Then came a Wednesday evening when Bertie was going to an evening party at a house two avenues off. It was to be a young-people's dance in honour of the fifteenth birthday of the daughter of the house, and, as most of the dancers would be under thirty, she needed no older woman to go with her; and Frank was going, who, as he grew older, preferred going to the dances and picnics where very young girls were rather than to those where there were women nearer his own age.

As the house was close at hand they were to walk,

and Rebekah had brought Bertie to her own room to dress her, because of the large glass there.

"Don't you think it looks nice?" Rebekah asked.

Bertie was standing before the wardrobe door; she looked like a head of a large white hydrangea, in the gauze dress Rebekah had helped her to make: "Oh, I think it looks lovely!"

Rebekah, standing behind her, looked at the dress critically. Her own small, delicate face was drawn and white, as though needing rest: "Your hair is not high enough if you are to wear the flowers under it," she said.

She mounted a footstool and stood behind Bertie and unwound the coils of back hair to pin them higher.

Then Bertie said in her low, soft drawl, "Rebekah, haven't you ever wanted to go to dances? Don't you want to dance?"

"Yes," Rebekah said, "when I was a child I liked to dance. I used to go up into the kloof under the Kaffir-bean trees and dance and sing and throw up my arms till I got drunk and had to lie down on my face."

"Oh, I don't mean that kind of dancing," Bertie drawled slowly, "alone, in the kloof, by yourself! I mean with pretty dresses and other people to ask you to dance. I don't like you to stay alone here when I go," she said in a yet softer drawl; "you'd look so pretty if you were dressed in pretty dresses like me—you'd look like a fairy. Don't you think it would be nice to dance with other people, eh, Rebekah?"

"Perhaps," Rebekah said, "if you had someone you liked very much, and you two were quite alone—and you could go on dancing on and on for ever with no one there, it might be better than dancing alone—perhaps better than almost anything. That will do, I think." She got off the stool.

Bertie still stood impassively with her arms hanging on either side. "Yes," she said dreamily, "it would be nice to dance with someone you liked very much; I never have. But, Rebekah, you know, I don't care very

much whom I dance with now. It's the light and the noise and the going round and round I like. All the men are so kind to me, too," she added slowly, "and all the girls also; they don't mind that I dance so much all the evening. Isn't it nice of them, Rebekah?"

"Very." Rebekah was now fastening a white, half-blown rose on her breast.

"You know, I like it so when you go into a room, and they all look at you, and something so nice runs all up your body, when they all look at you and think you look nice. I like it," she said slowly. "Have you ever been to a real ball, Rebekah?"

"When I was first married. Frank went; and I wanted to go with him."

She turned to a wardrobe behind the door and took from it a dress of black diaphanous silky material speckled all over with tiny silver spangles, each carefully cut out and sewn on separately. She held it up by the shoulders.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Bertie, crossing her hands. "I never saw such a dress. Whose is it?"

"I made it for myself," said Rebekah. Bertie came nearer to touch it. "Mrs. Drummond had one from Paris, like this, only white. Frank said it was the most beautiful dress he had ever seen. When she did not want it any more I bought it from her as a pattern." She looked down at the dress. "I cut out each little spangle separately and sewed it on. It took me three weeks to make it." She turned the dress over. "This was the wreath to wear with it," she said, holding up a wreath of frosted leaves.

"You must have looked beautiful," Bertie said. "Your teeth, your dark hair—and the spangles—just like the night! Did Frank like it?"

"He said it was not bad."

"Do you never wear it now?"

"No, I keep it."

As she was hanging the dress up, Bertie said suddenly, "Rebekah, do you think, if Mrs. Drummond

was your friend, that she—that she—would really care for you—that she—that she wouldn't—take part with anyone against you?"

"I don't know, dear. I know very little of her. We have nothing in common. I don't understand her."

At that moment Frank's voice sounded from the hall, calling out that Bertie must hurry or it would rain before they started; and Rebekah wrapped her sister up in the large, red, silk opera cloak she had made for herself when she had first married and folded Bertie's white satin dancing shoes in silver paper, that she might carry them.

"Don't mend the stockings," Bertie whispered as she turned to go, half bending over her; "I'll darn them all to-morrow."

They went into the hall where Frank was waiting, and Rebekah saw they had their umbrellas and water-proofs with them. The night was of inky blackness; it seemed it might rain at any moment, and Rebekah stood in the doorway holding the candle high to light them down the veranda steps and along the path to the gate. When the two figures had gone out at it, she closed the door and turned back into the house.

In the dining-room she took from the work-table a large basket with the week's mending in it, and, placing the lighted candle on the top, went through the room into the one where her children slept. She paused at each bed to see that the child in it was covered; and then, still carrying the lighted candle on the basket, she opened a door at the end of the room and went into the next.

The room was a small one, made by cutting off the end of the children's bedroom with a partition. She had had it before as a study for herself where she could always hear the children call if they needed her at night. It was hardly larger than a closet, but there was a window in it and a small outer door, and both looked out on to the rockery and the plumbago hedge



but on nothing else, and there was a small door close beside the window, which she had had put in that at any time she might run out and work a little in the garden. The walls were covered with a red-brown paper, and in the centre stood a large oblong desk with drawers; before it stood an old arm-chair with a deep dent where a head had often rested. A waste-paper basket stood beside it. In the corner stood the tall wooden cabinet she had had when she was a girl to hold her fossils and insects, and which she had brought with her when she married; on a ledge in front her microscope stood. There was no other furniture on the floor, but on the walls hung three small bookshelves. One was behind the arm-chair, between the window and door; and in the corner beside it, on a little wooden bracket, was a tiny statue of Hercules a few inches high in old discoloured marble. This she had got from Mrs. Drummond when she first married, in exchange for a length of green silk which she had had as a wedding present. Mrs. Drummond told her her husband had bought it when he was travelling in Italy, but had left it behind with many other things he did not want when he set out on his travels in the Far East.

On another hanging bookshelf to the right of the desk were books of poetry, science, history, and travel; all of them much-worn cheap editions except one handsome new copy of Darwin's *Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication* bound in calf, which also she had got from Mrs. Drummond two years before, in exchange for some pots of roses, to stand in her drawing-room. It had been sent from England addressed to her husband, but as he was now in the mountains of Japan, and had said she need send nothing on to him, she was glad to let Rebekah have it.

On the wall to the left of the desk were three very small shelves, and on them were science primers and school books from which Rebekah had taught and most of which she had bought with the money her mother gave her for herself for drying peaches when she was a

child. They were all now very old. What she felt for them was what no one feels for the books out of which they have been taught by another—it was what a full-grown doe might feel for a little mountain stream, which it had found for itself when it was a very young fawn wandering quite alone and parched with thirst, and from which it had drunk. It might have tasted of many finer, clearer streams since then, but in none of them all would the water be to it like that in the little stream it found all for itself when it was a small thing, quite alone, and dying of thirst.

There was a *Cornwallis Grammar* with the back worn off, with which she had followed her father about over the ploughed lands one day, trying to get him to explain to her what a preposition really was, and, when he answered her absently in the cut dried words of the book, she had gone away behind the hedge and lain with the book open before her, and prayed that she might really understand. There was a Smith's *Latin Principia*, the gilt letters worn off its side and black back; she bought it when she was nine years old with three-and-sixpence which her father gave her when he went into the town to sell his wool and she went with him. She had bought it at a shop where they had books in the window, and had carried it home pressed against her chest all the way in the cart. She knew they would laugh at her if they knew she meant to learn Latin; but at night she sat up in her own room, writing the exercises by the light of a tallow candle she had begged from old Ayah, happy, thinking she would at last know all the Romans knew—what, she did not quite know.

On the shelf below were a number of cheap translations of Greek and Latin authors, which she had bought when she had found out she would never know Greek or Latin enough to read in the originals.

On the lowest shelf were five or six thin science primers in brown covers. She had seen them advertised in one of her father's newspapers, and she had sent money for them to a bookseller's in Cape Town

who advertised them; when the parcel came by post she had opened it on her bed, and she had lain down by the books and felt nearly faint with gladness. The Botany she liked because it taught her how to examine the parts of flowers and helped to take away that almost painful longing she had felt when she looked at them to understand a little why they were as they were. The Geology she liked much; but it had distressed her because, like the botany book, it was written for people in England, and the plants and rocks and fossils mentioned she could not find in Africa. Her father had some shelves of old brown books: she had read nearly all of them; but, except the histories, none interested her much: they did not explain to her the world about her, what it was. He had one book called *Pre-Adamite Earth*, which she read and agonised and prayed over, trying to understand it; only after she had grown up she realised it was a book no human being could understand, least of all the man who wrote it. But he had a large old atlas which he gave her, which lay now on the top of her wooden cabinet. She used to lie on her back for hours, with the atlas open on her chest leaning against her drawn-up knees and with the Geography at her side for reference, and look at the different countries and seas, and picture them, and fancy she was there, especially China and Japan and Greenland and South America; till her heart got large with joy, the feeling that she was all over the world. On the shelf below were books of children's poetry, and the one or two story books she had as a child; but the books on the shelf above them were much more poetry to her. She felt so for them, that, if she had lived to be a woman of eighty and someone had suddenly come into the room where she was with one of those old worn books in his hand, her heart would have throbbed, and the memory of the hunger of the fierce young soul for knowledge, as it first looks out on life, would all have come back to her.

Over the door leading to the children's bedroom was

tacked the picture of the Madonna from the *Illustrated London News* which she had had pasted over the head of her bed when she was a child. It was the only ornament the room held except the little statue of Hercules in the corner.

Often at night, as she sat alone in that room, she had pictured to herself what great works of art must be like, or great orchestral music; she had seen or heard neither, but she dreamed of them—as she dreamed of what it must be to be one of a company of men and women in a room together, all sharing somewhat the same outlook on life and therefore thinking somewhat the same thought, and able to understand one another without explanation—a thing she knew was possible somewhere in time and space—which actually did exist—though she might never know it.

On the brown carpet on the floor was a mark like a footpath where the nap had been worn off, running right round the desk. This was where she walked round and round, because the room was not large enough to allow of her walking up and down, as she used to under the trees in the kloof.

For days often, and sometimes for weeks, she did not come into this room; but she knew it was there; and there was always a quiet spot in her mind answering to it.

To-night she set the basket of darning down on the floor beside the desk and lit the reading-lamp, and, when she had put the candle out, sat down in the arm-chair, leaning her head against its dented back.

It was a long time since she got up before sunrise that morning to warm the baby's milk, and she was tired. She was to have another child in seven months, and her legs and the lower part of her body ached; but it was never the same to her if she sat to rest in that room or any other. From her shelves, the bindings of her books looked down at her, each one a little brown face that seemed to love her. Behind each was hidden the mind of some human creature which at some time had touched her own; they were all the intellectual intercourse she

had ever known. Not one was there because it was a rare or old copy, or had an expensive binding; each one was there because at some time she had lived close to it and it had penetrated her.

After a time she drew the basket nearer her and began to work. For nearly an hour she sewed on buttons and darned little worn places in little garments, till there was nothing left in the basket but a few pairs of socks and stockings; she took up one and began to darn it, but soon put it with the mended things in the basket, with the unmended at the top, and then leaned back again on her chair, resting.

Outside, the rain had begun to fall; it was dropping on the thatched roof with a soft soo-o-shing sound. She lay in the chair and listened to it.

After a time she drew her chair closer to the desk, and from one of the top drawers took a book. It was an exercise-book in a black cover. She laid it open on the desk.

In the drawer below were six or seven such books; some filled with the sharply pointed writing of a very small child who tries to write a flowing hand. In these were verses and short stories and little allegories told in rhyme—one very long allegory in blank verse, which was never quite finished—and one book held a story as long as a novel, and quite finished—and there were a few prose passages copied from books, which had struck the child as beautiful.

Some others were filled with the larger, more rounded handwriting of a young girl from twelve to twenty. They also held stories, but few had verses; and there were discussions on abstract questions. One book was a diary full of small daily entries, a book read, a visit found, seeds planted, but once or twice working out great plans for the life that was to be lived—countries to be visited—books to be written—scientific knowledge to be gained—all written with absolute confidence. Now and then there were passionate personal entries, almost incoherent little calls for love and friend-

ship; but they came not often, and some had been scratched out.

There were a couple of books filled after marriage; but the entries dwindled. Months passed in which nothing was written. After a child had been born and it had been necessary to lie still for weeks, there were dissertations on some abstract matter, or an allegory; but generally there were only short scraps: outlines of stories never to be filled in, and short diary notes of a very practical nature: on such a date the baby was weaned, or a new servant was hired, or she had planted a seed in her garden and set down the date to mark how long it took to come up. And sometimes (generally after a long interval in which nothing had been written) there were short notices, so written that no one into whose hand the book should fall could have understood them; in which dashes and letters took the place of words; such as "Came into the billiard-room unexpectedly. J. D.—Under the table. Ran out. Well, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. J. F." or "Again—again—again—to-day!"

To-night she drew the book towards her. It was four months since she had opened it; she had had no time since she returned from the Eastern Province. When last she wrote she had been sitting up for a night, to make poultices for her boy who had bad ear-ache, and, between whiles as he slept, she had written.

She had been carrying on a long discussion with herself as to what was the real cause of that curious hunger for an exact knowledge of things as they are, of naked truth about all things small or great, material and also psychic, which seems to haunt so many of us, and which seems so little to have affected the thought and life of Europe through so many ages. She had advanced the view that, to find any true likeness to the modern feeling, we had to go back to the life and thought of classical days, especially to the life and thought in Greece in the fourth century before Christ.

Here she had had to go and make a poultice, and she

had branched off on a side line when she came back, to question if it were not just the resemblance on this point—this common desire for an exact knowledge of reality, of things exactly as they were, first and before all things—which gives us that strange sense of nearness to ancient classical thought and art. Was it not this deep reverence for reality, even in material things, which made us feel so curiously akin to, say, a little Greek statue, in which every muscle and organ has been carved with solemn care to follow life—sex organ and knee as devoutly as eye and forehead? Was it not this common hunger after a knowledge of reality as an end in itself which, in spite of the difference in our technical knowledge and outlook in many respects, yet makes us feel, when we read the page of a translation of some book two thousand years old, as if it might have been composed this morning by someone walking up and down in the pine woods behind the house, as well as by a peripatetic pacing the paths of a garden at Athens two thousand years ago?—Which makes us feel that if, in the sunshine on the gravelled path in our own garden to-day, a certain old man with flattened nose and rough cloak were found lying, we should be able to throw ourselves down beside him with our elbows on the earth and listen to his talk and share in his outlook, almost as we might have done two thousand years ago? Is it not this which, though we know thousands of things they never knew, yet, when we read them, makes us feel—“My own! My own!”?

Is it not perhaps just the absence of this passionate desire to penetrate into the nature of all things and know them exactly as they are, which, in spite of their much nearer relation to us in order of time and by ties of blood and descent, makes us feel so infinitely more removed from the worthy Christian fathers and the sometimes gifted writers and thinkers of the Middle Ages (save a few heretics), and even from the mass of men of our own time—perhaps the very parents who bore us or begot us—persons who, living in the present, belong

yet to that past which, accepting all things, found virtue in faith and not in a keen unending questioning of the facts of life; so that when we, who to-day share the new spirit, strive to come near them, we seem to be looking at them across an impassable mental chasm and through the haze of an almost infinite moral distance?

Here she had been interrupted again. When she came back she had gone on to seek more narrowly after the cause of the new spirit.—Was it because we were more virtuous, that for us a knowledge of all reality—whether it concerned the shading of the down on a butterfly's wing, the exact nature of a handful of earth, the antennæ of a beetle, the movements of a planet, the how of sexual emotions or of social organisation—was to us a matter of primary importance, all wilful shutting of our eyes to it a crime, and all wilful misleading of our fellows with regard to it a social wrong?—while to men of the past, or men of the present holding the attitude of the past, such knowledge was only desirable and to be sought after if direct personal advantage to individuals could be seen to flow from it, while the wilful shutting of one's eyes to it, or the misleading of one's fellows with regard to it, might even be most virtuous actions if personal good seemed to flow from it?

She had held that it was not because we were more virtuous, but that the difference between the two attitudes took its rise entirely from two opposing intellectual conceptions of the nature of the Universe.

According to the old Christian conception, the Universe was a thing of shreds and patches and unconnected parts. Outside all we see and touch was the great individual Will, which had called into being mind and water, man, planet, star, stone, beast and plant, by the arbitrary action of its power, and which at any moment might return it all to nothingness, even the life that moves in animals having no permanence, and only that life in man which they called the soul having any future, though it had no past, and rose into being at an arbitrary fiat, like a stone and plant.



For the man intellectually holding this view to be true, the Universe could resemble only the heap of toys which a child gathers about it on the floor: doll, bugle, brick, book, having no subtle, living connection with each other, being there together only because the will of the child has brought them there.

Solemnly to study each toy because, when you understood its structure, it might throw light on that of all the others, and closely to study their relation to one another—this doll lies at such an angle to that bugle—would be the work of a fool, when any moment a kick of the child might disturb all their relations.

For the man sincerely holding the old view, truth, the thing to be loved and sought after more than life, can be only a knowledge of the will of the arbitrary ruling individual, and the only thing of real importance in life must be the relation between that one indestructible element in man and the ruling individuality. Truth, as it regards the shading of a feather on a bird's wing, the movement of a planet, the order of social growth, the structure of a human body, can be of no value; it may even be a positive duty to misrepresent or repress the knowledge of facts, if they bear on, or seem to have a bearing injurious to, the relations of the individual man and the all-powerful individual.

For the man holding this view of the structure of the Universe, "truth," in the sense in which it is a thing of value, cannot be simply the knowledge of all facts and all relations, as nearly as he can attain to it; it can be only the knowledge of certain facts for a definite purpose. The suppression of Galileo's discovery that the world moved—the habitual suppressing in art of certain aspects of life—the habit of continual questioning within oneself, not "Is this thing true?" but "What will be the effect of such knowledge or such a statement?"—is not, in the man holding this old view of the Universe, a sign of low morality and anti-social feeling; it is simply the logical outcome of his view of

the Universe. For him to take any other course would not be rational, would not be virtuous, would not even be sane.

For us all this has changed.

Slowly advancing knowledge has forced on us an entirely new view of the Universe. Step by step we have been brought almost to the standpoint from which many an old Greek looked out on life.

For us once again the Universe has become one, a whole, and it lives in all its parts. Step by step advancing knowledge has shown us the interconnecting lines of action and reaction which bind together all that we see and are conscious of.

Between the furthest star and the planet earth we live on, between the most distant planet and the ground we tread on, between man, plant, bird, beast and clod of earth, everywhere the close interconnecting lines of interaction stretch; nowhere are we able to draw a sharp dividing line, nowhere find an isolated existence. The prism I hold in my hand, rightly understood, may throw light on the structure of the furthest sun; the fossil I dug out on the mountain side this morning, rightly studied, may throw light on the structure and meaning of the hand that unearths it; between the life that moved in the creature that ploughed in the mud of the lake-shores three million years ago and the life which beats in my brain and moves in my eyes here in the sunshine to-day, I can see long unbroken lines of connection. Between spirit that beats within me and body through which it acts, between mind and matter, between man and beast, between beast and plant and plant and earth, between the life that has been and the life that is, I am able to see nowhere a sharp line of severance, but a great, pulsating, always interacting whole. So that at last it comes to be, that, when I hear my own heart beat, I actually hear in it nothing but one throb in that life which has been and is—in which we live and move and have our being and are continually sustained.

Having this view of the nature of the Universe forced on us, is it possible that our view of the nature and value of truth should not be changed?

The physiologist, when he seeks to study an organism, puts beneath his microscope an almost invisible spot of blood or shred of animal tissue, and devotes days or months to its study, not because he believes the individual shred or speck to be of any peculiar value, but because he knows that once rightly understood it may explain to him the nature of the entire organism of which it is a part. So we, who are dominated by this new conception of existence, are compelled to look upon the exact knowledge of even the smallest and most insignificant fact as sacred, never knowing when it may turn into the key which may unlock for us the meaning of part of that great universal life of which it is an integral fragment.

Holding this view of the Universe, we are compelled to walk almost awe-filled among even the small things of life; and, as the old Christian father, after much contemplation, was compelled at last to cry, "There *is* no small sin—all violation of the will of God is great," so we also are almost compelled to cry, "There is no small truth—all truth is great!"

Holding the old conception of existence, it was quite possible to believe that, between God and man, mind and matter, soul and body, there were many chinks and crannies where a lie might creep in and hide itself and be quite innoxious. For us there is no faith in such possibility; we can no more nurse a false conception without it causing injury than a foreign substance can be intruded into a highly organised body without causing disorganisation and disease. Whether the truth concerns the feathers on a pigeon's wing or the constitution of a lump of earth or a psychological fact, we know that it is vital.

Here she had had to leave off the first night. When she began the next night she went on to discuss how this new intellectual conception of the nature of the

Universe necessarily influenced our spiritual and moral outlook : how, for the man dominated by it, the existence of an extraneous will dealing arbitrarily with the things of existence was inconceivable, and the true revelation of the unseen and unknown beyond was to be found in the study of the seen and knowable about us ; how, for us, the true act of religious worship was the search after a knowledge of all reality ; how, for us, not less devout and religious than the old monk, who spent his life in copying and embroidering his missal or studying his gospel, is the man who to-day humbly devotes his life to the study of a spider's eye or the nature of a mineral, not knowing or seeking any direct benefit to flow to himself from the knowledge, but dominated by the profound conviction that the true comprehension of the smallest existence about us brings us nearer to the comprehension of the whole.

Then she went on to argue to herself that, for us, the true atheist was of necessity no longer the man who denies a knowledge of an unknown and unseen personality, but rather the man who believes that by juggling with facts he can outwit the Universe and make that which he knows is not as if it were ; and that the greatest wrong a man can commit towards his fellow is the wilful misleading of him as to any reality ; and the sin against the Holy Ghost—the sin which hath no forgiveness—is the conscious, wilful blinding of our own eyes to any form of reality.

So far she had scribbled four weeks before, when she was sitting up to make the poultices. Since then she had not thought of her discussion. But that morning, when she took the children to walk in the woods, she walked up and down under a pine tree, as they picked flowers, talking it over to herself. To-night she opened her exercise-book on the desk, climbed up in the chair and drew her feet back under her, partly because it was cold and she kept them warm so, and partly because the desk was a little high. She knelt up, bending low over the book, and began to write.

She wrote quickly in a large sprawling hand, because she had much to say.

She went on to illustrate how our new attitude towards truth influenced all our personal relations in practical life. She illustrated it first by the feeling of the mother who looks down at the head of her little new-born baby sleeping at her breast. The old mother, if she were religious, looked down at it and prayed for it that it might cling to the dogmas which she would teach it, and, allowing nothing to turn its faith from them, at last attain everlasting joy. The new mother, when she looks down at the little head upon her breast, whispers in her heart, "Oh, may you seek after truth. If anything I teach you be false, may you throw it from you, and pass on to higher and deeper knowledge than I ever had. If you are an artist, may no love of wealth or fame or admiration and no fear of blame or misunderstanding make you ever paint, with pen or brush, an ideal or a picture of external life otherwise than as you see it; if you become a politician, may no success for your party or yourself or the seeming good of even your nation ever lead you to tamper with reality and play a diplomatic part. In all the difficulties which will arise in life, fling yourself down on the truth and cling to that as a drowning man in a stormy sea flings himself on to a plank and clings to it, knowing that, whether he sink or swim with it, it is the best he has. If you become a man of thought and learning, oh, never with your left hand be afraid to pull down what your right has painfully built up through the years of thought and study, if you see it at last not to be founded on that which is; die poor, unloved, unknown, a failure—but shut your eyes to nothing that seems to them the reality."

Then she scribbled on to show how the new attitude influenced the emotional relations between man and woman.

All women of the past and in the present find woman's heaven when their head rests on the shoulder of the man

they love and his strong arm is about them; and as dear to the women of to-day as to the women of the remotest past are the love and tenderness of the man she is bound to. But yet the cry of our hearts is not the same. Beyond the cry for passionate tenderness there is another—"Give us truth! Not jewels, not ease—nor even caresses, precious as they are to us—are the first thing we seek: give us truth. We are weary with seeking for truth and being baffled everywhere by subterfuge and seeming; in your eyes, beloved, let us never have to seek it, let it come out to meet us. The love which is not planted on a naked sincerity, which needs subterfuge and self-deception and the deception of one another for its life, is a plucked flower stuck into the sand; what matter how soon it dies—it has no real life. Our love will more easily survive the most awful knowledge you can give us than the realisation that you have once willingly misled us. Should you lay your head upon our knees and tell us your heart had gone for ever to another, it would be easier for us to bear than that you had fed us with one subterfuge to shield us from knowledge. The highest sacrament of love we thirst for between our two souls is an almighty sincerity; if there is not this, then for us love's holy of holies is defamed."

She bent lower over her writing, scribbling quicker and quicker.

Then she painted the effect of our new feeling for reality upon the moral judgments we pass upon ourselves and others.

When we lie awake in the dark of night thinking, what causes us to start and our cheek to burn? That which makes us shift restlessly from side to side, as if we were trying to shake off something, is often not the remembrance of what men and women of the past would have regarded as our greatest crime; it may be no infringement of any decalogue that ever yet was written; it may be just some written or spoken word or some act, perhaps seeming to us, even at the moment it was

written or spoken or done, to be right and even magnanimous, but which falsified our relation with another or that other's relation to someone else. We remember it with a pain which manifest wrongdoings, recognised by the world, have not left; it is, when we remember it, as if a little knife cut into our heart, and we know till death comes it will always be sticking there.

She scribbled on to show how it altered our moral judgment of others; how, for us, the great criminal was not necessarily the murderer, the ruffian, the drunkard, the prostitute, or even the frank, direct, and open liar; but, may be, a spirit encased in a fair and gentle body, rich in many graces of character and manner, openly breaking no social law and with no need to lie directly to others, because it lies always and so successfully to itself and within itself and acts persistently in harmony with that lie: a rotten apple with dead seeds and a worm at its core, and a shining surface. The old view was that the great sin lay in not speaking truth to your fellow when thereby you caused him practical loss; for us there is one infinitely greater—the sin of the soul that refuses to see the naked truth within itself and therefore can never show it. The man who lies to his fellow poisons an external relation—but the soul which lies in itself to itself, acting always a part before itself, becomes a poison, a deadly fungus that scatters its poisonous seeds unconsciously whenever it is touched.

The rain was now falling in torrents, running off the thatched roof and streaming down the rockery and along the garden path; but she scribbled on without hearing it.

She was trying now to show the effect of the new attitude with regard to truth on our feeling for art. For the man or woman holding the old view, the story, the picture, the statue in which certain artistically necessary aspects of life are intentionally suppressed or misrepresented for certain practical ends, the human nature falsely painted because it seemed undesirable to

paint it as it is, the fig-leaf tied across the loin of the noblest statue, gives no pain and is still art; while, for those of us who have long set an intellectual value on sincerity, a mental habit has been formed which makes the perception of the wilful suppression of truth emotionally painful and so destroys our sense of perfection in the object in which it appears. The true reproduction of a sunrise, or a narrative that shows the working of a lofty spirit, may be more delightful art for us than the art which reproduces the texture of a lady's dress or paints the picture of a small soul; but the representation of the smallest or slightest aspect of life, if we are conscious of truth in it, in so far satisfies an emotional need in us and becomes for us, so far at least, an object of satisfaction; while no art can be art for us, however lofty its claims, which does not satisfy what has slowly become a master need of our natures. A work of art may have many other elements of beauty for us; but it must be a revelation of truth for us, or it means nothing. Better the true picture of a beggar in his rags than the wilfully false picture of a saint.

So she scribbled on, hearing nothing of the rain outside, bending low over her paper with her chin pressed down on her breast. But presently she began to write slower and slower, and presently raised herself and sat watching the lamp. Then she sank half back in the chair, still on her knees and, after a time, began slowly drawing with her outstretched hand the pictures of faces down one edge of the page she had written on. They came out slowly, one below the other, some with sharp features, some with dark beards and curls, some with blunt features, some grotesque and some beautiful; she did not seem to be looking at them as she drew them. When she got to the bottom of the page she dipped the pen into the ink again and sat turning it round and round in her fingers and dipped it again. She was questioning in how far she had been right in her conclusions, and arguing the other side. Then she jumped suddenly from the chair and began to pace the



room in the footpath round the desk. She clasped her hands behind her with the pen still between her fingers, and it made a large ink-spot at the back of her little blue print skirt.

What after all did she know of art, except the art in literature? The book of photographs of great statuary, which she had bought at great expense, had so disgusted her with the modern fig-leaves tied on with wire that she had never brought it into her study but had thrown it into a corner of the drawing-room. What would she really feel if she could study plastic art in all its forms, not only Greek, Assyrian, Egyptian, Indian, not through books at second-hand, but actually, as though living, in climates that produced them?<sup>1</sup> She shot out her left hand greedily as if grasping them.

After she had walked for a time, she stopped suddenly at the door of the children's room, and, half opening it, stood listening to hear if they were still quiet and asleep; then she closed it softly and walked on with her hands behind her. Her thoughts had wandered far now, though the new chain of thought was bound link by link to the old. From thinking of Greek art and literature, her thought wandered on to the old, old problem which had held so great a fascination for her, even when she was a child and read, in her father's old brown leather-covered *History of the Ancient World*, its stiff long-worded accounts of the Assyrian and Egyptian and Roman and other early empires, and had traced with a dry pen on the mildewed map in the front of the book the path over the mountains which the Goths and the Vandals and the Huns took when they came to overrun Italy and destroy Rome, till the map had worn quite thin there. It was the old, old problem that had always fascinated her: why, when a nation or a race or a dominant class has reached a certain point of culture and material advance, has it always seemed to fall back

[<sup>1</sup> What she actually wrote was: "not through books at second hand, but to them all actually living, in climates that produced them!"]

from it, and the nation or race or class to be swept away? Always the march of human progress has died out there, to be taken up again by some other race or class in some distant part of the globe or after the lapse of centuries—to die out there also after a time, never proceeding persistently in a straight line. Was there an immutable law, based on an organic and inherent quality in human nature, which caused this arrest? Was it futile for us to hope that human advance might ever proceed persistently and unbroken in one direction? Was that which governed its arrest an organic law, like that which ordains the length of a man's beard, which, however long the individual may live, when it has once reached a certain length will always stop growing? Is it absolutely futile to hope that humanity can ever advance as the fern palm grows, beautiful frond beyond beautiful frond opening one out of the other as it mounts up higher and higher?—or have the arrest and decay, so invariable in the past, being merely dependent on external and fortuitous conditions, having no one organic root in the human nature itself and therefore being possible to avoid?

That morning, when she had taken the children for their walk in the pine woods, she had been pacing up and down under a tree while the children picked the bluebells among the grass, and had been arguing over the matter, almost as she used to argue with Charles under the pear tree. She had taken first the standpoint that it was organic and inevitable. To-night, as she walked round the desk, she took the other view (which was really her own) and tried to defend the position that there was no sufficient evidence that this arrest and decay was really organic and therefore inevitable. One thing alone would be enough to account for it—the fact that a high advance in intellectual culture and social organisation has never yet been attained by any but a minute section of the human race as a whole, and always by merely a small section of the inhabitants of any single territory. That such a minute section of humanity

has never been able to maintain its advance proves nothing except that, humanity being intimately in its nature a solidarity and a whole with all its parts reacting on one another, one minute fragment can never move very far ahead of the mass without ultimately being drawn back, either by internal disintegration, brought about through that body in the society itself which has not been included in the advance, or through external and violent contact with other parts of the race which have not shared its advance.

That all so-called advanced societies have, in the past, always disintegrated and fallen back does not prove that a hard rim-line exists which humanity can never surpass, and cannot prove this while we are in possession of a fact which adequately accounts for this retrogression without any such supposition.

She paced up and down quickly and more quickly with her hands behind her, still holding the pen, and went on in her thought to illustrate her view.

What was that high point of advance, intellectual and moral, which we speak of Greece having attained in the fourth century before Christ, and from which she receded so quickly and completely—was it indeed Greece which ever reached that point? What was that much-vaunted culture, that high creative energy, that passionate thirst after intellectual insight, that demand for personal freedom, that search after physical beauty, but the possession of a few males who constituted the dominant class in a few cities of Greece! What was that much-vaunted culture but a delicate iridescent film overlying the seething mass of servile agricultural and domestic slaves and of women, nominally of the dominant class, but hardly less servile, and perhaps ignorant, who constituted the bulk of its inhabitants? As little could it be said to have been the property of the inhabitants of the land of Greece as the phosphorescent light on the surface of the ocean is the property of the fathoms of water stretching below it whose surface it illuminates. It would be as rational

to expect that such a form of culture, brought into existence for a moment by a combination of happy conditions, could hand itself down from generation to generation, expanding and strengthening as it grew, as to expect a spray of shrub, plucked and placed in a vase of water in a hothouse, though it might bloom profusely for a few days, should permanently propagate itself and persistently grow when it was without ground and had no root.

But even had things been otherwise in Greece—had its women, they who alone have the power of transmitting the culture and outlook of one generation safely to the next, been sharers in the culture and freedom and labours of its males, not merely partially in the person of a few of its *hetairai*, but in that of the bulk of its child-bearing women—had every hand that laboured in the fields or the cities been that of a freeman, sharing to the full the civic rights of his State, possessing a stake in its material welfare and a culture that enabled him to rejoice in its art and share in its thought—had that happened, which never yet has happened in any land—had Greece been filled with a population homogeneous in their culture and freedom—had no untaught servile woman existed to suckle any Greek child—had no slave formed a rotten foundation stone in the social structure—had culture, freedom, and civic rights been the common property of every human who breathed on the soil of Greece—had the social superstructure been sound and homogeneous from foundation to coping stone;—even then, though the vantage gained, instead of passing away in a couple of generations, might have remained for a few hundred years and there might have been more persistent progress; yet,—could it have been even tolerably permanent?

For what was the whole of Greece itself but a mere spot on the earth's surface? What were its people but a drop in the ocean of humanity? Unless she could have walled herself in, shutting off all possibility of interaction with all the races beyond herself, sooner or

later she must have been so interacted upon by the mass of humanity beyond, that change and disintegration, moral and intellectual, must have set in, and she must slowly have fallen back to the common level.

As she walked she had paused before the little statue of Hercules, and, taking it automatically from the bracket, stood holding it in one hand and softly stroking it down with the finger of the other as though she were feeling its outline : yet her eyes appeared not to see it. After a while she put it back on the stand and began pacing again.

All the civilisations of the past, in Egypt, in Assyria, in Persia, in India, what had they been but the blossoming of a minute, abnormally situated, abnormally nourished class, unsupported by any vital connection with the classes beneath them or the nations around ? What had they resembled but the long, thin, tender, feathery, green shoots which our small rose trees sometimes send out in spring, rising far into the air, but which we know long before the summer is over will have broken and fallen ; not because they have grown to a height which no rose tree can ever attain, for ultimately the whole rose tree may be much higher than the shoot, but because they have shot out too far before their fellow-branches to make permanence possible ; having no support, wind and weather will sooner or later do their work and snap them off or wither them. Next year a dozen rich young shoots may sprout from the snapped stem and survive ; it may not have shot upwards and been broken off without helping in the growth of the whole tree—but it, itself, perishes.

If the whole of our vaunted modern advance, our science, our art, our social ideals, our material refinement, were to pass away to-morrow, swept away by the barbarians we nurse within the hearts of our societies or which exist beyond, would it for a moment prove that humanity had reached its possible limit of growth, and not rather that a sectional growth is no permanent growth ?—that, where the mass remain behind, the

few are ultimately drawn back? (As the head of a tortoise, let it stretch it out as it will within certain limits, can never continue to advance while its hind legs are sticking in the mud; would it move, it must pull its hind legs forward.) Would it prove that our loftiest ideals of human progress were futile?—man moving ever in a little ring, advancing and for ever falling backward as soon as the edge is reached—and not merely that the true cry of permanent human advance must always be “Bring up your rears! Bring up your rears”? Head and heart can ultimately move no farther than the feet can carry them. Permanent human advance must be united advance!

Then she thought suddenly she heard the baby stir. She threw her pen down on the table and took up the lamp, went into the next room and bent over his cot. But he had only turned in his sleep and was resting quietly. She bent down and turned him on to his side and put the nipple of his feeding-bottle into his fist and close to his lips that he might find it if he woke. She had had to wean him because of the new baby that was coming. Then she tucked the cover in at the back of his neck and went back, closed the door softly behind her, and began to walk up and down.

If the advance of a nation or a race must always ultimately be stayed, partly because of the internal action of the undeveloped mass within itself which must in time disintegrate it, and partly because the interaction with humanity beyond itself must ultimately draw it down and back, how much more must it be the case that a solitary individual city can never reach its full development in a society far behind itself?

That the highest and most harmonious development of the individual which we dream of is never reached, and that the attempt to attain it seems always to lead to intense personal suffering or absolute social destruction for the individual striving, in no way proves that the ideal is ultimately beyond reach—an *ignis fatuus* which the human hand will never grasp. As the nation or the

class which should first have developed so far that it turned all its energies entirely away from the creation and wielding of the arts of destruction and self-defence, and turned them entirely to the creation of the beautiful and useful arts which benefit all mankind, would, ultimately and probably very soon, be swept away, as long as anywhere on the earth's surface there were still races so retrograde that they devoted all their energies to the arts of destruction; and as the nation, which should have attained the moral standpoint at which it became no longer possible for the stronger to absorb all the good of life and in which therefore poverty and need become extinct, would inevitably be overcome by the wanting and miserable products in other societies where a lower moral standard prevailed, if any such society existed anywhere on the earth—so more surely the individual, who should arrive at a higher moral point of development and strive to realise his ideals in actual life, must inevitably suffer or be absolutely annihilated in a society which had not reached his standpoint; and this not because his ideal was inherently unattainable and might not be the ultimate goal of the race, but simply because, for its realisation harmoniously and successfully, it wanted more than the solitary unit, it wanted the interaction of the whole society.

A wolf who should suddenly be smitten by the idea that, instead of tearing his fellows to pieces, it would be better if they made a league of co-operation and fellowship, and for that purpose filed down his canines, would quickly become a prey to his fellows, not because his ideal was incompatible with successful animal life, for other forms have attained to it, but because its attainment by one was impossible.

So the individual primitive man in a cannibal tribe who had become possessed with the idea that the eating of human flesh was undesirable, and who had refused to capture and feed, would have become an object of scorn and probably of hatred to his tribe, and might probably have died of hunger in some time of pressure,

not because his ideal was ultimately unattainable, for practically to-day the whole of humanity has reached it, but because change in the idea of his fellows and the common carrying out of agricultural and pastoral labours were necessary to its successful attainment.

The man who dreams to-day that the seeking of material good for himself alone is an evil, who persistently shares all he has with his fellows, is not necessarily a fool dreaming of that which never has been or will be; he is simply dreaming of that which will be perfectly attainable when the dream dominates his fellows and all give and share. Working it alone, it fails, because the individual is part of an organism which cannot reach its full unfolding quite alone.

The man who should have reached a point of development at which sex in all its manifestations, whether physical or mental, has become a matter for reverence, and who should find his ideal reached only by a perfectly free and even comradeship between men and women at large in human society, and the personal ideal reached only in a relationship in which the mind fully shared with the body and in which the best in each half united into the perfect human creature called forth, who would desire that all that was most self-forgetful and heroic in his nature should be brought into play in the relation, as men desire to hang only the fairest wreaths before the shrine of the chief god in their temple—could such a man ever fully realise his ideal, or even attempt to realise it, without acute suffering and many-sided failure, in a society in which the brothel reigns and the ideals which the brothel presupposes, in which sex relationships are viewed by the mass of his fellows from the two standpoints of crude and selfish physical enjoyment or of gross material benefit? Might not his very attempts to bring men and women into freer and more equal fellowship in themselves seem to produce more evil than they remedied, simply because they were not ready for it? Would he himself not be almost certainly misunderstood and his personal relations end



in irrevocable failure? What would this prove but that each man is but a cell in the human organism and that what his full development might be we shall never know till others share it with him?

The man whose ideal it is that, by the non-requital of injuries and the large expansion of sympathy even toward those who inflict suffering on himself, is human good and justice finally served—do his failure to evoke any response, and his final crushing beneath the hands he refused to strike, prove anything but the solidarity of humanity and that the foremost branch which grows too far beyond its fellows must ultimately be snapped off? That no individual ever yet realised in life the highest development which the mind has dreamed of proves [? does not prove] that perfect truth and fellowship are not attainable to humanity, but that the one alone cannot compass them.

Is it not a paradox covering a mighty truth that not one slave toils under the lash on an Indian plantation but the freedom of every other man on earth is limited by it? That not one laugh of lust rings but each man's sexual life is less fair for it? That the full all-rounded human life is impossible to any individual while one man lives who does not share it? "Bring up your rears! Bring up your rears!"

She walked, whispering softly to herself. Outside, the rain had left off falling; only the drops fell from the branches of the trees over the roof as the wind moved them, and the great drops fell slowly from the thatched eaves; but she did not hear them, she was so happy talking to herself.

Now her thought shifted its standpoint. She imagined the mind she argued with to take a new view and to say, "Granting you are right and that the full developed individual and the race must be hampered and limited by that of the less developed, is it not practically our duty and for the benefit of humanity that we should forcibly suppress, cut off and destroy the less developed individuals and races, leaving only the

highly developed, to survive?" She imagined it to produce all the arguments for the destruction of inferior races and individuals, stating them as fairly as she could. Then she turned to the other side and stated the view which was really her own.

She walked quicker now, but with her head still down, striking the palm of one hand now and then with the doubled-up fist of the other.

Firstly, where is any body of humans to be found impartial enough, and untouched by the warping of personal and racial prejudices, to be able to determine for the race at large just what qualities are desirable and should be preserved and which should render their possessors liable to destruction? Would not each individual composing it be warped, not merely by a weakness for his own personal qualities, mental and physical, but would not racial prejudice make impartial judgment for humanity at large impossible?—the Chinaman judging from the Chinaman's standpoint; the Hindu from the Hindu's; the Englishman from the Englishman's? Could any but a race of crowned immortal gods, untouched by human self-love with its bias, form any conclave which should dare determine, not merely what were the ideal qualities after which they individually should strive and which they should impress on the race by preaching and example, but which would justify them in physically destroying those unendowed in them?

But, granting that it were possible to find such a body of humans on the globe (which it is not and cannot be), who would draw up an infallible code of all the qualities desirable and to be sought after by expanding humanity and of all those to be crushed and undesirable to the race, two difficulties that could not be surmounted would yet remain. Firstly that, given this almost divine conclave had succeeded in drawing up a list of all the qualities which are desirable in advancing humanity—the physical qualities of muscular strength, organic soundness, physical beauty (the idea of which differs so

much from race to race and even from person to person that no representative body of humans ever could agree in what it consisted)—that general vitality and harmony of parts and forces which makes physical life a joy—the mental qualities of reason, imagination and keen and quick perception—the social qualities of sympathy, kindliness, rectitude, and all other qualities desired by humans in their fellows—and should exactly define what was meant by each quality and by its reverse: would they be much nearer the solution of the question what individuals and what races should be destroyed as weight and drawback on the development of the race, and which saved and sacrificed for as the highest development? For no extended list of desirable or undesirable human qualities could be drawn up, all of which could be found wholly incarnate in any race or individual.

You say, and rightly, physical health and strength are among the prime necessities of the fully developed human creature. The Kaffir and the South Sea Islander have often these in their very highest perfection: are these, therefore, the races to be preserved and which others are to be sacrificed for? You say a powerful reason is essential to the advance of the race: you find your man with the powerful reason, but diseased, anti-social, using his powerful intellect only as a means of preying on his fellow, often the great criminal. You say, at least let us kill out the hopelessly unfit, the invalid and the sickly and the consumptive: under this law you may ordain to destruction the bright, the lovely and most beneficent of the race. Has my view not as much to be said for it as yours that, if any on earth should be wilfully destroyed as the down-drawers of the race, it is not a Shelley or a Keats, who have enriched and beautified existence on earth beyond fifty thousand whole men; but that it is the man of perfect physical health, with far less intelligence, and organically incapable of living for anything but his own well-being, finding no joy in any kind of sacrifice for his fellows and transmitting his qualities as surely as the consumptive

or the weak, who is really the disease point in humanity, the creature who prevents the noblest social institutions and personal relations from coming into existence, because his egoisms can always be calculated to make them unworkable? You say that keen perceptions and the power of dominating are characteristics of the to-be-preserved races: but what if to me the little Bushman woman, who cannot count up to five and who, sitting alone and hidden on a koppie, sees danger approaching and stands up, raising a wild cry to warn her fellows in the plain below that the enemy are coming, though she knows she will fall dead struck by poisonous arrows, shows a quality higher and of more importance to the race than those of any Bismarck? What if I see in that little untaught savage the root out of which ultimately the noblest blossom of the human tree shall draw its strength? Who shall contend I am not right?

You say, "Let it be granted that social qualities are to count as high as or higher than intellectual or physical, then at least it will be justified that all avowedly criminal individuals and classes should be destroyed."—But who are the criminals? You say the prostitute, the murderer, the robber, the gambler. But who are these? The judge who sits in his elbow chair sentencing the man who plays pitch and toss in the street and himself sits up till two o'clock over his cards—the king and the prince who, while every avenue of pleasure and good is open to them, hang round the tables of Monte Carlo—the poor man who opens his back cellar for gaming to make a wretched living—who is the gambler? Who is the prostitute—the wretched woman whom the policeman drags along the street, or the man, often of wealth and learning and power, whose selfish lust and gold alone keep alive the institution whose bitter fruit she is? When you have crushed and destroyed the woman prostitute, what have you done more than cut out the tiny rotten place on the surface of an apple, while you leave gnawing away in the dark at the core the worm that produced it? Who is the robber and murderer we

have most to fear—the pirate who on the high seas grasps men and goods, the highwayman and the house-breaker, or the man who, shielding himself always carefully behind a law he sees works in his favour or knows how to evade, makes his wealth from the ill-paid labour of those in mines and factories working at the cost of life, and ornaments his wife and his daughters as much in blood-stained jewellery and garments as the robber who returning home puts on his wife's finger a ring cut from the hand of a living woman, or throws on his daughter's shoulders a garment spotted with a traveller's blood? Who is the man who robs his fellows of life and the fruit of their labour, that we may be sure he shall not slip through our fingers, leaving the wrong man there? Who is the gambler, prostitute, robber, murderer? Is he king, prince, judge, as well as beggar and tramp? How shall we make sure he gets judgment in exact proportion to his offence? And further, is there any definite action or state which, judging for the world as a whole, can be set down as marking out the criminal? Has not the buccaneer, the polygamist, the polyandrist been the hero and the virtuous man or woman of his community? Will any action more certainly bring down the judgment and social punishment of his society in some countries than refusing to bow the head to a passing wafer of flour, in others the eating of pork, or the refusal to take his dead brother's wife, or give his daughter to the chief harem? Have not robber chiefs been regarded as quite as respectable and unliable to punishment in their society as the wealthy wage robber and the prostitute king and the hangman who are with us? What definite action will you set down as marking the criminal?

You say that of course no definite concrete action can be set down as marking out the criminal, that it is one in one society and another in another, but that he is yet easily marked off: he is the man who in any society refuses to submit to the laws which its dominating power has instituted and who persists in facing the

punishments and penalties it ordains; and that, if he were in all societies destroyed and prevented from perpetuating himself, his type might become absolutely extinct and the qualities he possesses die out from the human race.

Perhaps this would be so; but are you sure you know what you are doing? For on that broad road of opposition to law and authority, along which stream the millions of humanity too low to grasp even the value of laws and institutions about them, resisting them from an ignorant and blind selfishness which makes them believe they are improving their own condition by violating them, there are found walking men of a totally different order—white-robed sons of the gods with the light on their foreheads, who have left the narrow paths walled in by laws and conventions, not because they were too weak to walk in them, or because the goals toward which they led were too high, but because infinitely higher goals and straighter paths were calling to them—the new pathfinders of the race! These men, who rise as high above the laws and conventions of their social world as the mass who violate them fall below, are yet inextricably blended with them in the stream of souls who walk in the path of resistance to law. From the monk Telemachus, who, springing into the Roman arena to stop the gladiatorial conflict, fell, violating the laws and conventions of his society—a criminal, but almost a god—up and down all the ages man has been on earth there have been found these social resisters and violaters of the accepted order, the saviours and leaders of men on the path to higher forms of life.

It is true that if, persistently and with a rigour from which none escaped alive, you could in every land exterminate the resisters of social law, you might at last produce a race on earth in which even the wish or the power to resist social institutions will have died out; your prisons might be empty, your hangmen and judges without occupation. But what would you have

done? Seeking to cut out humanity's corns, to remove its cataract, to amputate its diseased limbs, you would have put out its eyes, cut off its tongue, maimed its legs; unable to see or move or express, its heart would beat slower and slower and death would come.

There is no net which can be shaped to capture the self-seeking ignorant violator of law which shall not also capture in its meshes the hero, the prophet, the thinker, the leader—the life of the world!

As the oak tree cannot grow unless, with each new ring it adds, its old bark cracks and splits, so humanity cannot develop without the rupture of its old institutions and laws; and it has been exactly because the bulk of humanity have never of necessity been able to distinguish between this healthful disruptive process and unhealthful decay, and have sought to crush and annihilate the particles causing it, that the growth of humanity has been as slow as it has. To suggest the more rigorous extermination of all non-law-submitting humans is simply to suggest a slow suicide as far as human development is concerned. In all ages the multitude has looked upon Barabbas as a less violent and dangerous disrupter of social laws than the Christ—not this man but Barabbas!

But you may say the criminal is, of course, not to be marked off in all societies merely as the breaker of any of its laws, for then, of course, the man who strives after better ideals would be included with the man who strives after lower; you say the true criminal is that man who, whether within or without the law, is willing to inflict suffering and loss on others for his own gain; and undoubtedly this is the true criminal. But how is he to be found, since it is not by the committal of any definite marked-off act, or by the violation of public enactments, but by the nature of his motive, that he becomes a criminal? It is certainly not a Lucrezia Borgia, adulteress and murderer, who of necessity, judged by the standard of motive and the amount of suffering caused to others, will always come out the

great criminal. The fair gentle woman, never transgressing any enacted law, always seeking for love and sympathy and determined to gain them at all cost to others and all sacrifice of direct sincerity, may inflict in the course of her life an amount of suffering and wrong before which a few direct murders count as nothing; not merely by the love she takes from others or the friends she divides, but by the much more terrible distrust of human nature she awakens; by showing that, below so much gentleness and virtue, self-seeking and rottenness may lie, she strikes at our faith in our fellows, than which no more terrible wrong can be done. Yet under what code or before which tribunal could she be condemned to death? She is the snake in the Garden of Eden; yet who can swear she has poison as she glides noiselessly by? When we all lie silent in our last sleep with our feet turned upwards, if a god of life, knowing all things, should pass us, meting out judgment according as we had caused suffering in the search after our own good, would he of necessity pause over the worn-out drunkard and the street-treading outcast? Might it not also be over the woman of virtue and philanthropy or the man, hail fellow well met with all men, who paid his debts of honour and owed no man anything—saying, “There lies the great criminal!”?

But, you may say, granting that we cannot determine who the criminals are who should be destroyed for the benefit of the race, or the kind or degree of ill health which should be followed by instant destruction, yet surely such an ideal body of humans should find no difficulty in desiring the annihilation of all dark and primitive races who are manifestly a down-draught on humanity.

But are they so?

Is there really any superiority at all implied in degrees of pigmentation, and are the European races, except in their egoistic distortion of imagination, more desirable or highly developed than the Asiatic? Are we not in our vanity like the parvenu who, having wrung wealth



out of the labour of others and surrounded himself by the results of all human toil and knowledge, stands in his gorgeous room filled with the works of art and use of all nations and, with his hands in his pockets and his full belly, looks round with infinite satisfaction at what he has accumulated about him, and says, "All these are mine," believing really that their existence and creation have something to do with himself? Are we modern Europeans not the parvenus among the human race? From the ancient civilisations of Asia and Africa, ancient and complete, when we were merely savage, have we not got all the foundation and much of the superstructure of what we possess? Art, science, letters, all are their original creation, merely taken over by us; even our very religion, such as it is, we could not invent for ourselves, but had to take it over from a hook-nosed, swarthy, Semitic people. And, if the learning and art and industry of Asia and Africa, passing into the hands of that marvellous bloom of humanity the Greek race, in its little span improved and enlarged what it took, it yet has been no work of ours, the Northern barbarians; we were running naked and staining ourselves with woad in our woods, when the looms of India and China were producing the delicate fabrics we seek now to imitate, when Asiatics ate from golden-flowered and delicate china, when temples and statues were raised that are our wonder and admiration, when philosophers taught and thought, and books were written and great legal systems enacted, while we sat round our fires on the dung and gambled with knuckle-bones or danced war dances to the shouts of our fellows. It ill becomes us, who are but the tamed children of yesterday, to talk of primitive savages. Even to-day, when we have inherited all, is it so certain that our vaunted civilisation is so much statelier and on all sides wider and with nobler elements of truth lying at its foundation than the older civilisations of the yellow and brown races? Is it so sure we are the people and wisdom will die with us? Is it not possible, for instance,

that there is something of deep wisdom in the Chinese ideal which gives so much of the beauty of life to the end, which gives even the woman when she is old, the mother and grandmother, so honoured and tender a place in society? Is it quite wise to sacrifice all to youth, so that every man and woman fears old age and would sacrifice all to avoid it? Must not the whole of life be more beautiful when men wait for good at the end, the joy of the sunset? Is not the religion which permeates Asia, and which came to life while our fathers still dreamed of heaven as a hall where men drank wine from the skulls of their enemies, more in harmony with the teaching of modern knowledge, which is reshaping us, than even that other Asiatic religion which we have adopted? Did not the deep-seeing eye of the Buddha, hundreds of years before the Jewish teacher walked in Syria, perceive clearly beneath all the complexities of form and individuality the unity in life upon the earth? He did not get at it as the modern man of reason, slowly, by measurement and calculation; by deep perception he knew that our little brothers look out at us from the eyes of animals, that the life of no beast and bird or insect is alien and unconnected with ours, that life flows on earth as one large stream with many divided branches, and under his mystical doctrine of the transmigration of souls he covered the same radical truth which "evolution" expresses in other but perhaps more absolutely accurate terms. We Northern fair-skinned have had great men; our glimpses of new truths, new masteries over matter, have added our grain to humanity's sum of riches even in the direction of creative art; but, when we look around us on what we call our civilisation, how little is really ours alone and not drawn from the great stream of human labours and creation so largely non-European? We scorn the Chinaman because his women compress their feet, not perceiving how infinitely more deadly and grotesque is the compression of our bodies; we ridicule, in certain Asiatic races, the pigtail of the Chinaman or the dark-

ened tooth of the Japanese, blinded by egoism to the infinite degradation of the Northern races in their passionate strife to imitate ever-changing costumes and modes, alike so far removed from nature and beauty that even we, when a few years are past, perceive their grotesqueness and vulgarity, the slavish imitation of fashions which, by their unending change, feed on the vitals of the race through their ignoble demand on the brain of its womanhood, absorbing energy, reason, imagination, and setting, so long as their diseased reign lasts, a limit to the progress and expansion of woman and, with her, of the race. We accuse of immorality the Asiatics who consume the opium we forced upon them at the point of the sword; but we fair Northerners deserve to-day, as fully as when the Roman spoke it two thousand years ago, the judgment that as a people our chief pleasures were drinking and gambling; our race courses and card tables are as essential to our happiness as the dice and knuckle-bones to our forebears. Is it not more than possible that, infinite as has been the debit of humanity to the ancient non-European peoples in the past, they have yet more to confer in the future?

You may answer (she walked quicker and quicker, looking down at the carpet) that no sane, informed mind could regard the old master races of the East, who have led in the path of civilisation, as consigned to destruction by their inferiority; that it is the dark and primitive races still leading a life of nature that it is so necessary should be removed and suppressed in the cause of humanity.

But not only does it ill become us, the latest tamed of all civilised races, to speak slightly of any primitive barbarian; not only among ourselves is a race such as the Prussians, who were civilised many centuries later than the men of France or Spain, in no way considered by us inferior to these, but we hold, and perhaps rightly, that by engrafting of our savage forebears on the older civilisations of Europe, though we mercilessly destroyed them for the time being and plunged all Europe into

barbarous chaos for over ten centuries, that we yet vivified human life and that our savage eruption was in the end a benefit. The older civilisations were too nearly extinct, we say, by excessive civilisation; a back-beat to the unclothed men of the woods and nomads of tents was necessary to vivify them. But if this were so, may not the most primitive races have the same function to fulfil towards us? Is it not possible that man, a creature of the plains and hills, naked and always in unbroken activity in the free air, cannot survive beyond a certain time when he goes about loaded with materials from all the vegetable and animal and mineral kingdom which he has gathered from all quarters of the globe—as a mantis collects mud and shells to make a case for himself, when he buries himself deep among his little erections of mud and stone, shutting off from body and brain light and air, when he has so constructed life that half of his body social is parasitic and enervated by want of labour, and the half it feeds with crushed under the superimposed weight—is it not possible that the primitive man, individually and structurally as well as socially, may, in some future æon, have the same restorative function to fulfil towards ourselves as we imagine ourselves to have played towards older decadent civilisations?

You say that the primitive barbarian is ugly and repulsive to us: Were not our forebears so to Greeks and Romans? Were not Attila and the Huns so horrible, physically and mentally, in their eyes that they were believed to be the offspring of witches and evil spirits, nothing wholly human being possibly so repulsive? Was it not death to the Roman woman who wedded a barbarian? To have eaten or drunk or slept with him was disgrace. He was supposed even to have an unendurable smell. Was the difference not at least as great between the lovely cultured Greek and the trained imperial Roman, between Pericles and Virgil, and the naked and spear-brandishing long-haired savage, drinking blood from the skulls of his enemies, as between

his modern descendant and any primitive savage on earth? Who shall say that, in destroying the child of nature with his perhaps simpler organisation and untried nerves, we are not destroying that of which humanity may yet in the æons to come have need to keep the race upon the earth?

At the worst, which is fairer and more akin to the ideals towards which humanity seems to move?—the little Bushman in his open cave on the mountain brow, etching away into the rock with his little sharpened flint the picture of hunting or wild beast, and looking down in the glory of sunshine on the place below where the wild things graze, or a swell-chinned ragged woman staggering out of a public-house in one of our centres of civilisation, while the man who made the drink dwells in high places? Which is lovelier here, now, or in any place or time—the troop of men and women on a South Sea island, naked and gladly disporting themselves in the water or wandering together in the sunshine and sharing their love in the open light of day, or the scene that night by night our great cities witness? Which fills us with a sense of the greatness of the human spirit—the Kaffirs on their flat-topped mountain refusing to surrender month after month, till the conquerors when they mount at last find only one or two hardly-moving skeletons—men, women and children having died with hunger—or the civilised soldier who has sworn to die, but when a tenth part of his numbers have fallen puts up the white flag, willing to take life but not to lose it?

He needs be a brave man who would dare ordain destruction to all primitive and barbarous people, who could feel so sure humanity will have no need of them on her march through the future.

But letting all those difficulties pass (she stretched out one hand with the palm extended): supposing it were possible for us to find an individual, a class or a race, so constituted that it presented in itself all the conceivable disadvantages and deficiencies which can afflict human

nature and none of the advantages; supposing it were possible—which it never would be—to find anywhere a body of humans as diseased, as devoid of physical health and the vital enjoyment of life as a worn-out man of fashion and debauch, as stupid and ill-shaped as a Bushman, as brutal as the savage, as false as the worst civilised man, as anti-social as the criminal, as hypocritical as the Pharisee, physically deformed and mentally wanting, combining in itself all the drawbacks of each form and stage of human growth and none of the advantages—you may say: “Here at least we have found at last the creature or class whom, to perfect its own growth, it is necessary society should slay and mercilessly destroy.” But is this so? If such individual or race were found, would it even then be proved that the highest use which society could make of them would be to destroy them? Does not the essential element, which it is most important to develop if human life on earth is ever to attain to its full blossoming, lie in just that very sensitiveness towards the right of existence of all other human units, that deep-seated and at last organic desire not to benefit ourselves at the cost of others, which this course of action would tend to blunt and kill? In attempting to remove the undesirable and, to us, retrograde portions of human society, are we not blunting and striking at the very existence of the quality in ourselves which is above all essential to full human unfolding? Might not an immensely more productive use be made of such undesirable elements of life, by using them as objects for the development of those broad and generous human feelings which are the crowning beauty of life? In seeking to exterminate the undesirable of the race when we find him, may not society be striking at the very heart of its own progress, inflicting a mortal wound upon itself which exceeds in deadliness any which the undesirable individuals could have inflicted on it? Is it not an act of moral suicide?

And (she stretched out her hand softly again) if even this point also were waived, if it be allowed that it

might be possible to find a body of humans so perfect and impartial that they are fit to legislate for the race, and that it might be possible for them to discover persons and races so hopelessly undesirable that for the benefit of the race's growth they must be destroyed; yet there remains the second great difficulty—who would bell the cat? Supposing this body of enlightened impartial and thoughtful humans decided that tyrants, drunkards, gamblers, murderers, robbers, hypocrites and all inflictors of suffering on their kind, and stupid and blindly narrow persons were an evil to the race and should be destroyed—would this enlightened and philosophic body of persons be themselves able to carry out their edict of destruction and become captors and executioners? And, if they had to delegate it to others, would not the very persons to be destroyed be often the persons fit and able to carry it out? The debauched judge, the ignorant, stupid and narrow jailer, the brutal and stupid soldier, the bloodthirsty tyrant, the very individuals ordained to destruction, may be the most impossible to get at. You may condemn Nero but you cannot compel him to destroy himself, and you may not be able to find anyone capable and willing to do so. The very conditions of lofty intelligence and wide unbiassed sympathy, which would alone endow any human being with the gift necessary for impartially judging for the race, are the very qualities which might render him unfit and incapable as executioner.

But you may say that all this is merely irrelevant child's play; that no sane person supposes you could find a body of humans wise enough and impartial enough to determine for the whole race which are the retrograde elements which must be destroyed for its benefit or powerful enough to destroy them when it has so determined; that the same end is attained much more securely and quickly by simply allowing all the physically stronger elements in humanity everywhere to destroy the weaker; that, by the stronger everywhere destroying the physically weaker with a wonderful

automatic action, all that is undesirable in humanity is killed out and all that is desirable remains. But is this so?

You say that, by this process through the ages of the past, all improvement and unfolding in life on the earth has taken place, and that nothing else is necessary to produce the fullest beauty, joy and strength for the race on earth.

But is this so? Has life on the globe or has mankind attained to its present position, low as that is in many ways, because the physically stronger has preyed on the physically, for the moment at least, weaker?

You say this is the great law of the survival of the fittest which leads to all beauty, strength and unfolding in sentient life; that to interfere with it in any way is to interfere with nature's one plan for attaining perfection.

You shelter yourself under the name of science. Are you not, and one-eyedly, perverting the teaching of great minds, as the priestly in all ages pervert and make falsehood of the perception of the great prophets who preceded them?

(She was whispering so loudly to herself that, in the next room, you would have thought she was speaking to someone beside her.)

You say all evolution in life has been caused simply by this destruction of the weaker by the stronger.

From every cave and den and nest, from the depths of the sea, from air and earth, from the recesses of the human breast, rises but one great "No!" that refutes you. Neither man nor bird nor beast, nor even insect, is what it is, and has survived here to-day, simply because the stronger has preyed on the weaker. The law of its life and its growth and survival has been far otherwise. From the time when, in a dimly living form, amœba sought and touched amœba, and, meeting, broke out into a larger form and divided into fresh forms, life has been governed, step by step, through the long march and advance in states of life, by union; love and expansion of the ego to others has governed life. From the



insect, following that unself-conscious reason we call instinct, who climbs to the top of the highest bough to fasten there her eggs where the tender shoots will first sprout to feed them, on to the bird who draws the soft down from her breast to warm the nest, who toils to feed and warm, and hovers about before the feet of the dangerous stranger that he may be drawn to attack her and not find her young, and who draws up the food from her own crop to feed them, till love becomes incarnate in the female mammal feeding her young from her breast—this is my blood which I give for the life of the world—through all nature, life and growth and evolution are possible only because of mother-love. Touch this, lay one cold finger on it and still it in the heart of the female, and, in fifty years, life in all its higher forms on the planet world would be extinct; man, bird and beast would have vanished and the cold dim dawn of sentient existence would alone exist on a silent, empty earth. Everywhere mother-love and the tender nurturing of the weak underlie life, and the higher the creature the larger the part they play. Man individually and as a race is possible on earth only because, not for weeks or months but for years, love and the guardianship of the strong over the weak have existed. You may almost estimate the height of development in the creature by the amount of mother-love and care he stands for.

You may say that mother-love forms an exception in the rule of nature, which, for perfecting life, demands the destruction of the weak by the strong. But what of the protective care of the male, not only of his own young and his related females, but of all the most helpless of his group? It is not only the sea lion who carries about his young in the bag on his own person; but through all sea life runs the defence of the weak by the stronger. Could the ostrich breed out its eggs in the wastes, where long journeys for food are needed, if the male did not daily take his hours of brooding on the nest to keep the eggs warm and care for and watch over the young with a tenderness even greater than their

mother's while she goes afar to seek for food? Could the female bird of many kinds rear and feed her young without the continual aid of the male? Nor is it only parental sympathy, but a much wider feeling for the weak, which makes possible much of the higher animal life about us. It is not only for the defence of his own young that the old stag stands ceaselessly watching for danger and raises his shrill cry when he sees it approaching, at the greatest risk to himself. I have seen upon a cliff a baboon stand defending the one defile where dogs could mount, hurling them down with his hands and glancing back every moment anxiously to see how the troop of males and females carrying their young were escaping, clinging to his post till he fell torn to fragments by the dogs, saving his race and his species, not by his vast power of destruction, but by his willingness to be destroyed that others might live. The survival of the mierkat, so small and defenceless on the barren plains where so many other creatures become extinct in the presence of danger and of enemies, is accountable only when you know that each mierkat acts for all; not for their own young only, but for each other, and, for the younger and more helpless, all labour and sacrifice themselves. When the hawk approaches, if the older males and females be gone out far to look for food, tiny creatures, themselves hardly weaned, will seize all the tinier ones half an inch shorter than themselves and in desperate anguish strive to carry them off to the hole, forgetting all fear for themselves in their passionate attempt to save those who may have no blood relationship with themselves, while the older males and females grow gaunt and thin in the breeding-time, because almost all food they find is brought to lay at the feet of the young, while mothers go away to seek food which will supply the quite small with food. It is this passionate love for one another, this endless self-sacrifice of all, this devotion to the weaker by the stronger, which makes it possible for these little delicate furry creatures with their beautiful eyes and small

powers of defence to survive in our terrible barren enemy-filled plains. The panther and the lion have vanished in the terrible presence of man, and many other forms of life grow very scarce, but these tiny creatures are still surviving, aided by their passionate devotion and self-sacrifice.

Then among men in their very struggles with each other, is it always the strongest fist and the fiercest heart which aid races or individuals to survive? Has not a great love lain behind those marvellous victories of which the world's history is full, where small and relatively weak nations and individuals have survived and driven back the large and powerful—a love for an idea, for a race, for a land, which, by blotting out personal considerations, has given weakness the power to protect itself and survive? The legend of the Swiss who gathered a score of spears into his breast, and so made room for his fellows to break the phalanx and win their nation's freedom, is only emblematic of one of the deepest-seated transforming and preserving forces in human nature. The legend of the mother, which in varying form almost every country possesses, who, to save her child from the bird of prey, climbed where the foot of the bravest and strongest could never tread, to recover it, is universal because it outlines the profound truth recognised everywhere that an almighty affection and the instinct for even self-immolation in the serving of others is not merely one of the highest but one of the strongest forces modifying human life. Almost everywhere in the record of human life on earth are the traces of rapine and slaughter and the suppression or destruction of the weak form by the strong; and they have left their marks not only in the heavy and to us hideously-protruding jaw and beetling eyebrows of the male gorilla, dividing him from the more human female and young, but giving him that strength of bony structure which is necessary to enable him to rend and destroy; not only in the structure of the scorpion, all sting and tail, so loathsome from the human standpoint that,

were it not that it bears its young about upon its back, it would seem so unredeemably repulsive as to be none other than a nightmare; but it may have given the springbuck her long graceful legs to flee from the jaws of her enemies, and have brightened the eye of the gazelle to see in the far distance the destroyer and to aid in its escape. It may even have rendered more intense some of the most complex emotions in the higher animal, because the species in which individuals were most inclined to defend the weak at their own cost may have survived where more purely self-centred varieties fell. It has played its part, and a vast part, in the history of life on earth. But to regard this destructive element in existence as the key-note to life on earth is a strange inversion. When we look from a hill-top on a herd of wild antelope on the plain below us and two old males come into conflict and desperately wound and perhaps kill one the other, the very fact that we are so struck by the incident and absorbed in watching shows it is not the universal, the all-pervading element, of the life before us. The care of the young by the mother, the drawing of sex to sex, the feeding together in good-fellowship of hundreds of creatures—all this rouses no curious remark in us, because it is but of the universal substance of life that things should be so. To attempt to explain and sum up life by considering this element only is like the man who should attempt to represent a great musical symphony by playing its lower base notes alone,<sup>1</sup> like a man who should try to reproduce a great composer's masterpiece by striking all the discords in it without any of the harmonies into which they resolve themselves and with reference to which alone they have any meaning. From the mysterious drawing together of amœba to amœba, their union and increase, on through all the forms of sentient life, and in the life of the very vegetable world, the moving

[<sup>1</sup> After "alone," the MS. (in so far as it is legible) runs: "without the . . . and the air and the . . . , which alone gives it form and life," is like, etc. This sentence is omitted.]

original power is always this stretching-out, uniting, creative force; shaping itself in the union of male and female, of begetting with their begotten; drawing together creatures of like and unlike kinds, bringing into all the forms of friendship and union and love, it lies at the root of existence; it shapes the petals of flowers, not for death but to call the insects to suck their sweetness and carry fertilisings to one another; it sings in the song of all song-birds calling to their mates; it blossoms into human speech; to kill, man might have been silent; but to communicate with and bind himself to his fellow, child to mother, mother to child, the sexes to reach each other, man to reach man belonging to his social organism, man was obliged to blossom into speech. Everywhere this binding moving creative force moves at the very heart of things, growing more and more important and complex as the creatures mount in the scale of life, till it reaches its apotheosis in the artist, in whom the desire to create dominates all else, who, not from himself but by the necessity of some force within himself, is spent and must spend himself to produce that which gives infinite joy without ever being used up, over which there need be no struggle; for not-seeing the statue or not-hearing the story or not-singing the song makes others poorer. Men have so recognised that this creative (and not the destructive) power was the fount and core of life that in all ages they have tended to call the highest intelligence they could conceive of, and therefore their supreme God, "the great Creator"; and their devils have been destroyers. It is false to say that the mighty jaw and the almighty claw, and the stomach that is never filled and is always seeking to fill itself, are the fundamental moving power in life—

' 'Tis love that makes the world go round,  
The world go round, the world go round ! '

(She was speaking so animatedly now you could almost have heard what she said in the next room.)

But you may say that, granting love and self-oblitera-

tion in the cause of others play a dominant part in the sentient life among kindred and groups, and that the mysterious instinct to create and continue to reproduce lies as the fundamental hidden power manifested in all we call life—granting all this, yet you must allow that, at least between species and species and distinct groups, a terrible conflict has always gone on, that this victory of the strongest jaw and the longest claw and the biggest belly has resulted in the survival of the fittest, and that, in the world in which this strife has gone on, we have many beautiful things—singing birds, flowers, the wonderful intelligence of man and beast—this has grown up under the struggle!

Yes, the struggle has gone on and the fittest have survived. The fittest?—to survive; not of necessity the fittest in any other sense in which we humans use the word.

The fittest has survived! Under water, half-buried in mud, only the outline of the jaw and two deep slit eyes show where the alligator lies. Age after age he has lain in the mud and slime. The gazelle has come down to the water to drink and has been drawn in by the mighty jaw; the little monkey, delicate, quick, high-witted, swinging from branch to branch and stretching its hands out to dabble in the water, has come too near, and the brown stump has moved and snapped it up; the human child has come to play upon the bank and disappeared; the young girl has come to draw water and only her broken pitcher has been left on the mud to show where she was drawn under; all have gone to fill the almighty maw and been crushed by the mighty jaw; the creature survives. In the ages which have passed since it came into being, many fair and rare forms have existed and passed out of existence. The little winged creatures with large eyes and brains, reptile in order but fitted for flitting in the air and sunshine, whose images we find impressed on the rocks, have gone; they may have had rare and beautiful colours for anything we know and may have had notes.

of song, but they are gone; fishes and birds and beasts that have been, have passed for ever; even in our own ages lofty forms of life have passed and are passing away; but the alligator survives. Not because it was more fair, more beautiful, more complex, more brave, than the creatures upon whom it lived or whose stay on earth it outstayed, but because its long jaw set with serrated teeth, its dead, solid hide, its absorption simply in seeking food for itself, its torpid, half-buried existence on mud banks and amid slime, fitted it to destroy the complex pulsating animals and to outlive the beautiful aerial forms which had not its almighty jaw and its mighty stomach. It was fittest to survive. The boa constrictor wakes in the morning, and before night bird and beast have been crushed in its mighty folds; it lies stupefied and torpid, with the creatures it has consumed in its expansive inside. It has survived them, not because it was fairer or higher in the scale of being than they, but because so greasily and silently it could creep on them. The cobra strikes dead man and beast, and survives, not because she is braver or higher or even stronger, but because beneath that tooth she carries that little poison bag and strikes so silently and it may be in the dark.

If a ship full of poets and philosophers and men of science bound for some distant place of meeting were wrecked on the shore of Africa and a cannibal tribe met them, they would be consumed. The savage would rub down and oil his sides with the fat of the poet; the brain of the philosopher would frizzle before the fire; the cannibal's belly would be full of man of science and artist; in a time of famine the cannibal might survive and beget his kind, when a neighbouring tribe died out from hunger for want of timely poet and thinker! Would the fact that he had eaten poet and philosopher prove he was higher than the men who filled his belly and gave strength to his muscles? The fittest to survive—but the fittest for what else? Even when nation sweeps out nation, what does it mean?

Is it always the loftier, more desirable form that survives? When the barbarian swept Greece till Athens was left like an empty and bleaching skull, is it certain that the savage was higher than the race which he supplanted? In nearly two thousand years in that land of blue seas and mountains, he and his descendants have produced nothing that the world prizes or desires. The fittest survived!—the fittest for what?

You say, at least it must be allowed that, along with this struggle among sentient beings and the survival of the strongest jaw and the longest claw and the biggest belly, rare and beautiful things have survived and are among us to-day?

Singing birds are with us, insects of beauty and colour, beasts of intelligence and heroic forms, and man, who, in spite of all, has instincts and powers latent within him of rare beauty, and strength, reason, imagination, sympathy and joy. Yes, this we have—but, oh, for the songs that will never be heard on earth now!—for the beauty we shall never see!—for the forms of light and glory which will never flit among earth's trees!—for the creatures of intelligence and complexity that will never tread earth's floor!—Oh, the might have been, which is for ever impossible now! Much has escaped—but, oh, for that which in the long, long ravaging struggle of the ages, has not escaped from the strong jaw and the long claw and the poison-bag! Oh, for the forms of life, perhaps higher than any we know or ever shall know, which in their very first incipience were cut away and made impossible for ever! In this awful struggle (a struggle waged with no purpose of bringing the great and beautiful to life) what has been saved, we know; what has been lost, we shall never know. The gorilla and chimpanzee are with us; but what if, in some hidden forest, a yet more beneficent, intelligent type arose, developing quite a way from the predatory to a more social form, till, meeting with the stronger-armed, heavier-jawed gorilla, it was exterminated, and one line of beneficent growth shut



off for ever? It is difficult to understand how what we call man ever came into being—the manikin thing with such small physical powers of defence and attack, whose young for years, in spite of mother-love and male protection, could so easily fall a prey to any wild beast, and who at its best is physically small and powerless—unless he first, for long periods, developed in some sheltered situations where attacks from predatory saurians or more modern carnivora were rare; but what if somewhere, it might be among inaccessible mountain peaks and valleys in the dim times when man was shaping, a branch existed in whom in time, having to expend no great force in purely predatory or physically self-defencing directions, the germ of other faculties developed higher artistic and musical and reasoning powers, deeper and broader powers of originality, all that for the last many millenniums we have been slowly and with difficulty marching towards when the conditions of life have allowed; if this variety ever were thrown into contact with a more gorilla-like form intent on destruction, it must have been swept away; that one act of destruction would have delayed the march of humanity for ages—nay, prevented it for ever perhaps from attaining certain noble and to us desirable shapes.

If it were possible for us to land upon a planet in most things like our own and launched on its course with ours, it is quite possible we should find upon it a being as much higher, and from our standpoint more desirable, than our highest ideals are higher than ourselves; our early stage of sentient growth might have been the same, and this difference, now so vast, might have arisen merely because, once or twice in the course of growth through the æons, their highest intellectual and moral type might have escaped destruction by its lower. This is certain, that the lower and more brutal self which slumbers within each one of us to-day, with regard to which the chief difference between man and man is this, that one man's life is passed in submitting

to it and another man's in struggling with and crushing it—this more brutal self, which the Christians have called inbred sin and all students of the human heart have under different names recognised—this body of qualities, which seems to some for ever to limit human growth, so ineradicable and heavy in its weight it seems—has it not gained its strength and vitality, is it not still within us in such mighty force, because age after age not merely those races but those individuals in whom its existence was weakest have been killed off by the individuals most incarnate of the lower nature and not allowed to perpetuate themselves freely, either physically or spiritually? Lies are so easy to us because age after age the lying and subtle and insincere have conquered and crushed the individuals in whom sincerity and openness were budding. It is so difficult for us to consider others justly and impartially if they have terribly injured us, because age after age the individuals striking most mercilessly at whatever limited their pleasure, without consideration of justice or sympathy, have killed out and suppressed those in whom generosity and justice were beginning to dawn. Lust, divided from all love and inborn self-forgetfulness, is so dominant within thousands of us (making the world of sexual relations, which in our ideals are the highest, often the lowest, in life), because age after age the most brutally lustful has perpetuated himself, where the less lustful and brutal has failed to rape and force the woman or kill the opposing males. Because, age after age, the individual tendency to expend force in the direction of impersonal intellectual activity has again and again fallen victim to the individual more concentrated on personal aim, we to-day find the complex intellectual gift of the thinker and artistic creator so rare and so heavily conflicted with by the lower opponents. Because the stronger sex has so perpetually attempted to crush the physically smaller, the individuals who attempted to resist force by force being at once wiped out, sex has acquired almost as a second-

ary sexual characteristic a subtleness and power of finesse to which it now flies almost as instinctively as a crab to the water when it sees danger approaching, the struggles against which being the sternest that sex has to carry off within itself if it would attain moral emancipation. Because the larger male has so long and so mercilessly suppressed the weaker and exterminated those who refused to submit while the servile survived, we find perhaps that lowest of all human qualities, the material tendency to truckle before success and power, which in some humans seems instinctive and in them at least is ineradicable. For it is not alone through the physical destruction and annihilation of the weaker by the brutally stronger that we have suffered. What has humanity not lost by the suppression and subjection of the weaker sex by the muscularly stronger sex alone? We have a Shakespeare; but what of the possible Shakespeares we might have had, who passed their lives from youth upward brewing currant wine and making pastries for fat country squires to eat, with no glimpse of the freedom of life and action, necessary even to poach on deer in the green forests, stifled out without one line written, simply because, being of the weaker sex, life gave no room for action and grasp on life? Here and there, where queens have been born as rulers, the vast powers for governance and the keen insight the sex possesses have been shown; but what of the millions of the race in all ages whose vast powers of intellect and insight and creation have been lost to us because they were physically the weaker sex, whose line of life was rigidly apportioned to them at the will of the stronger, which governed the structure of their societies? What statesmen, what rulers and leaders, what creative intelligences have been lost to humanity, because there has been no free trade in the powers and gifts of the muscularly smaller and weaker sex?

Therefore let no man lay the flattering unction to his soul that, by rushing out and destroying what is weaker than himself, or that, by using and bending to his own

purposes all that live in the society in which he lives, he is thereby aiding nature in the great and lofty and perfect life on earth. The struggle between sentient creatures and the conquest by the most cunning, the most merciless, the most consuming, the muscularly or osseously stronger, has had powerful effects on the shapes which life takes on; it may have added to the keenness of the eagle's eye, the length of the spring-buck's graceful bound; it may even have added to that intensity of anguished love which makes one baby mierkat try to drag a smaller away to safety when it sees the hawk approaching, because the little people have learnt by a long racial experience what the claw and beak mean, and those who have loved and aided each other most have survived—the fittest to live, not the fittest to kill in that case!—it may have sharpened the wits of all creatures who had to escape, as the poison-bag of the serpent teaches great caution in the country where it prevails (we always part the grass with our foot as we walk—though it might be just as well to walk without parting!); it has left many beautiful and curious forms of life, but has also destroyed many; it has nursed into being all the vices which lie deep buried in sentient life; it has age after age killed out among advancing human creatures the individuals who, to reason, love, or any of the impersonal ends of life, sacrificed the arts of destruction and self-defence; it has hanged its Christ and poisoned its Socrates; it has nurtured in everyone of us the brute which we shrink from in another when he turns it to us; it has killed out the winged reptile and a thousand noble complex and brilliant forms of life, and has saved the crocodile and the python. The only strength which it directly preserves is predatory strength; strength of reason, strength of self-government, strength of affection, all the forms of strength most prized by the human creature as it advances, are not preserved of any necessity by it. The struggle between the forms of sentient life and action within a species, and the survival of those

most fit to destroy, have no more made existence what it is than the road on a mountain-side makes a mountain. It has modified, in some directions powerfully modified, the external forms of life, but no more made it what it is than a hatchet used to chop trees in an orchard makes the trees; the hatchet, wisely used or by accident so used, in lopping off certain branches, may make the trees bear larger or more fruit; but used otherwise it may entirely destroy the tree, and, used recklessly and by chance, might cut down the whole garden. The process of pruning itself, however wisely carried on to produce certain ends, is an entirely subsidiary process, whose end, in increasing the size or abundance of the fruit, may generally be equally attained by manuring and feeding the tree; but it fails utterly to account really for the tree, whose essential life and essence lie in its power of growth, in the mysterious power of absorbing and adding to its substance in certain directions and along certain lines and of reproducing itself. All the pruning and cutting off in the world can never account for the fundamental mystery of one bud becoming a flower, for one grain of matter in the soil or particle of gas in the air being transformed into bark, for the kernel and reality of life. Pruning is a process which creates and produces nothing new, but which, wisely used, may tend to accelerate vitality and desirable variation; which, applied haphazard, may produce mixed desirable and undesirable results; and which, used unwisely, may mean absolute destruction. Therefore let no man lay the flattering unction to his soul that, by destroying all he can destroy, and using and consuming all he can use or consume, he is aiding nature in the only way possible in perfecting the human race on earth. Let him not imagine when he prates of the survival of the fittest that he is enshrouding himself and his desires in impenetrable armour; he is only an ass masquerading in the scientific lion's skin put on hind-side before!

You say that, with your guns shooting so many shots a minute, you can destroy any race of men armed only

with spears; but how does that prove your superiority, except as the superiority of the crocodile is proved when it eats a human baby, because it has long teeth and baby has none? You say the fact that you can command the labour of so many of your fellow-men and gratify your desires proves that you are higher than they; it proves that your belly is large and your power of filling it great; but what, in these matters, are even you compared to the old saurians, with their vast claws and paws and rough tongues, who could have licked you off the face of the earth in a moment? The theory that humanity can be perfected on earth only by the stronger jawed, longer clawed, biggest bellied preying on the smaller is a devil's doctrine bred in the head of a fool.

But you may say: If the perfecting of humanity is not to be accomplished by this destruction of one part by the other, how then is it to be accomplished?

(She was walking very slowly now, and looking before her and saying nothing.)

Is it not possible only in two ways? Is there any hope of our in any way raising and hastening the rate of human advance if we cannot do it by the killing out and suppressing of individuals?

Surely there are ways. Has not the human only now, at last, command of two vast means for the modifying of life and the conscious perfecting of humanity? In that strange and lovely power which enables us to see and picture that which we have not in all parts ever fully seen, in the ideals which are clear before the human spirit, have we not the goal to be moved towards? And in our powers of reason the means to find, step by step, the paths that lead to them, have we not now reached a plane of life in which the struggle for existence that is to perfect human life need not in any sense be one between individual lives but between qualities within the individual—a struggle within each man to be fought mainly here (she raised her little doubled-up fist and laid it softly on her breast)—here, where alone each man rules omnipotently and

where alone the kingdom of heaven on earth he dreams of can be brought to pass—here, where the ideal must be formed and realised, or nowhere? Has not the time come when the slow perfecting of humanity can find no aid from the destruction of the weak by the stronger, but by the continual bending down of the stronger to the weaker to share with them their ideals and aid them in the struggle with their qualities? Is it not by the passionate persistent determination to realise within ourselves our highest ideal, and then, by that strange power which makes every man's life unconsciously a voice calling to his fellows to follow, to be able to call on those who have not yet seen so far? Is it not so, and not in any other way, that the real blossoming time of man on earth will ever come? And no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. It is not by destroying and crushing.

She was walking very slowly now, with her eyes wide open, but seeing nothing—then a picture leaped out before her mind that seemed to have no direct connection with the thoughts passing there:—

She saw a great plain, and on it a woman standing, large and beautiful; a loose garment draped the lower part, but the great arms and shoulders were bare, and the long hair, turned back from the beautiful face, flowed over the shoulders; but the beautiful eyes were filled with tears and the forehead bent with pain. Beside it there was a great rush of wings and then another figure stood there, heroically large, half poised on one foot, as though just descended, and with wings half open as if ready for flight again.

She stood still. . . . After a minute she turned to her desk and, leaning across it from the side, drew her book towards her and, opening it at the end, began to write quickly on the inside of the cover, the writing running diagonally across it:—

“When the Spirit of the Ages, whose moments are millenniums, whose minutes are æons, and whose hours are a human eternity, passed amongst the worlds of

space seeing how it fared there, he chanced on a planet. A wide plain stretched there, no trace of plant or shrub was on it anywhere, and burning sands stretched everywhere; but far away in the distance rose mountains; on their sides one could see that streams flowed and that the earth was green and trees waved. Alone in the centre of the plain stood a woman's figure, bare and beautiful from the waist upwards, but clothed below in a coarse garment. Its eyes were fixed on the distant mountains; again and again as it looked it wrung its hands and tears streamed from the beautiful eyes. And the Spirit paused in its flight and lit on the earth beside her, and it cried, 'Beautiful one, why do you stand here weeping alone in this desolate spot, where no fair thing is, and the snake has left its track in the sand at your feet and the only footprint is the mark of the wild beast's claw? On the mountains there is verdure; surely birds are singing among the trees and the grass is heavy with flowers; why linger here in this desolate spot?' But she wrung her hands and cried, 'I cannot move; always and always I look out for one to come and deliver me and take me with him to the mountains, but he never comes.' And he said, 'Beautiful one, your forehead is high, your bosom is full, your arms are strong, your hands well knit; why cannot you move forward?' And she wept and raised the robe that was about her, and the Spirit saw that, while from the waist upwards she was fair and powerful, from the waist downward she was ill-nourished and loathsome. About her feet were iron fetters, upon the limbs were marks of unhealed stripes, old gangrenous wounds festered there, and the flesh was shrunken from the bones and the feet deep sunken in the sand. And she cried, 'My head is clear, my heart is sound, my arms are strong, but my feet, my feet, they bind me here! I wound and strike them, but they will not move; I bind them with chains in my anger. It is they, it is they, who keep me here!' And again she wept. Then the Spirit dropped his wing and drew nearer to her and whispered,



‘Despairing one, no deliverer will ever come. You, you yourself must save yourself. From those weak limbs strike off the fetters; with your strong hands bend down and heal the wounds your hands have made; remove the sand about the heavily sunken feet. When they are healed and free and strong, they, they and not another, will bear you to the mountains where you would be.’ And he asked her, ‘What is your name?’ And she answered, ‘My name is Humanity.’ And he said, ‘When the years have flown I shall return again and see how it fares with you.’ And he smote his wings together and rose upwards: and Humanity was alone upon the plain.”

She wrote quickly across the inside of the cover; when that was full she went on to the fly-leaf opposite; then she paused a moment; at the head of what she had written she put as a title “The Spirit of the Ages.” Then she drew her pen through the words as if not satisfied. Then she threw her pen down on the table. She looked round. All the room seemed strange; the old brown walls, the little bookshelves, the lamp throwing down its light on the worn leather cover of the desk, the old exercise-book she had been writing in—they looked like things look when you come back from a long visit, when all about the house is strangely familiar and yet new.

She closed the exercise-book and put it in the drawer. Perhaps some day the little allegory would enlarge itself and she would write it in fit words to make others see the picture. Probably she would never touch it again because it takes time to write things for other people. But the little picture she would never forget, because the pictures one sees are actual and one never forgets them. She walked to her arm-chair and sat down. She knew suddenly that she was very tired; she had been walking nearly three hours; but it was a delicious kind of tiredness, like one feels when one comes home from a long walk in the open air: as if something were resting by being used. She leaned back her head into

the little dent. The rain was falling now in torrents. She leaned back listening to it. It was a delicious sound. It made her feel as though great strong arms were folding themselves about her, and a great strong hand were stroking her down softly. She lay still; but after some time she drew herself up and curled her legs under her, and turning sideways half buried her face in the dent in the chair's back. She tucked one hand under her cheek and after a while closed her eyes. Her thoughts ran around in a dreamy way now. How nice it would be to be a man! She fancied she was one till she felt her very body grow strong and hard and shaped like a man's. She felt the great freedom opened to her, no place shut off from her, the long chain broken, all work possible for her, no law to say this and this is for woman, you are woman; she drew a long breath and smiled an expansive smile. Oh, how beautiful to be a man and be able to take care of and defend all the creatures weaker and smaller than you are! Then she dreamed away, and half asleep made one of those little stories, "self-to-self" stories, that she made as she was going to sleep, not for other people, too sweet and close, just for herself. She was a man, she thought, and she lived in a cottage about which there was bush and high forest, as at the old farm. It was night, and she thought she was lying there, and outside the trees were rustling as the wind moved them. It seemed she was lying on the earth, on mats in the hut, and beside her lay the woman she loved, fast asleep. She felt the little head on her shoulder, the soft hair against her cheek, and the little body within her arm; then she heard the wind blowing and the tree branches touching the roof as the wind grew strong. The little one beside her moved uneasily, and as it lay so close she felt the little body throb and knew it was the life within it that he had wakened. (She was him now, not herself any more.) And such a great tenderness came over him, and he drew her close and bound his limbs about her so that she was quite wrapped about, but the little wife

upon his arms slept on, not knowing how she was loved. And then it was another day, and the little child was born so small and soft, and he held it in his arms and put his lips to its soft tiny lips (she felt the lips touch hers), and then he took it in both his hands and put it close into the little mother's arms against her breast and bent down over them,—and then it all shimmered away and she, Rebekah, was asleep.

She had slept peacefully in the chair for perhaps half an hour; the oil in the great transparent glass bowl of the lamp was burned down three quarters of the way when suddenly she woke with a start and leapt to her feet. It seemed to her she had heard the front door close with a great bang. Perhaps it was her husband and Bertie come home; she stood to listen, but there was no sound of their voices. She was taking up the lamp to go and see, when she remembered it was the stable-boy's evening out, and that when he came back late he often came in at the front door, instead of going round the back way to the yard where the servants had their rooms, if he saw lights in the house. Still she took up the lamp; in the children's room they were all sleeping quietly, and when she went through her bedroom and the dining-room into the passage she found no sign of anyone having been there, and went back to the study.

Her sleep had refreshed her, but left her stupid and dull. The rain had left off and there was only the sound of a few large drops falling softly from the trees over the house as the wind shook them. She yawned and stretched herself and sat down in the arm-chair again. She drew her work-basket to the side and put the lamp on the edge of the desk and went on darning the stockings that were left. She darned on mechanically, thinking of nothing much, but she remembered she must count the wash-clothes the next morning and ask the washerwoman about the three pairs of socks that were missing. And then she wondered whether she should mix on the sour dough now or leave it till the

morning, and she decided to leave it. She watched the needle move in and out among the blue threads in the stocking almost without seeing them and was growing very sleepy again, when, just as she was darning the last pair, she heard a click at the gate and a step on the garden path that she knew was her husband's. She lit the fat-candle quickly and went to the hall to meet him. He was hanging up his cap but had still his greatcoat on.

"Where is Bertie?" she asked.

"That is what I wanted to ask you. Hasn't she come home?"

"No, I've not seen her."

"I suppose she has. I went to have a round with some of the young ones in the back room; and a quarter of an hour ago, when I wanted to leave, I went to look for her and couldn't find her. The curious thing is she left her walking shoes and cloak and all behind her. But no doubt she's here all right."

Rebekah turned down the side passage from which Bertie's room opened, and her husband, still in his greatcoat, followed her.

She opened the door and looked in. "She's here," she said. She walked in, shading the light with her hand. On the large old-fashioned four-poster bed which stretched right across the end of the room, so that there was just space for a person to stand at the foot, Bertie lay asleep. She was still in her ball dress, lying on her back in the centre of the bed, with no pillow under her head and with one arm thrown across her forehead. The train of the white skirt hung wet and dragged with mud against the white quilt. Rebekah stepped to the bedside, shading the light with her hand that it might not fall on Bertie's eyes. Frank stood beside her.

"What on earth made her run off like that? She was dancing hard when I left the ballroom."

Rebekah gave him the candle to hold and stooped down to put a pillow softly under her head.

"What a magnificent creature she is!" he said. Her right arm was stretched at her side, and the great white rose, partly faded, was fastened at her breast. "There's not another woman like her in the Peninsula, not in South Africa! And so unconscious! That's what men like. Young Smith came twice to talk about her to me this week. Did I think she'd ever change her mind and have him!"

He expanded his chest, his white shirt-front showing between the parted edges of his overcoat. Rebekah was smoothing the pillow.

"Women think," he said importantly, "that men don't see through them when they ogle and flirt and try to captivate every fellow they meet; but we do! That style of woman's all very well to dance and flirt with, but when he really wants a wife and means to settle down he looks for something different!"

Rebekah had gone round to the foot of the bed and was kneeling down, taking off the little drenched white satin slippers. "What can have made her run home in these things?"

"Now I knew what I was about when I looked out a certain little woman!" he said; still holding the candle and smiling down. "There were half a dozen damsels in the Peninsula thought they were quite sure of me, but I knew where on a certain farm in the Karroo a little woman was to be found who wouldn't always be running away to balls and croquet parties to flirt with other men and forgetting all about her husband and house—and a nice pretty little woman too."

Rebekah had risen to put down the damp shoes and stockings she had drawn from Bertie's feet; he chucked her softly under the chin with his two forefingers as she passed him; "Wouldn't take 'No' for an answer either! Smart fellow, eh? Knows what he wants when he sees it!"

Rebekah knelt down to cut off with the scissors from her chatelaine the wet dragged end of Bertie's train; if that were taken off she would be dry enough to sleep

on till morning without harm, and the dress would never be any good again.

Frank had had three glasses of champagne and was in a good humour, exceedingly pleased with himself. He was an abstemious man; he took care never to allow himself more than was good for himself in the matter of drink or any other personal indulgence. Only twice in all their married life had Rebekah really seen him the worse for drink: once when he returned home at four in the morning and said he had been kept sitting up at his office to make up his books, and once on another occasion. He could drink several glasses without feeling them, but champagne always had an expansive effect on his nature, making him more sunny and talkative.

"I knew very well whom I was going to have," he said, looking down appreciatingly at the bed where Bertie was lying and Rebekah was kneeling cutting off the train; "ever since that day on Table Mountain when the rain came on and a certain little woman covered the lunch basket with her own waterproof and saved us from going home hungry, while all the other girls came running up to the rocks for us to help them up into shelter, timorous little darlings. I held a sunshade open over the head of one and gave her my hand, but all the while I was looking at a certain little woman down below tucking the covers in, with all the rain streaming off her. Oh, men aren't such fools as they seem." He laughed. "I'd always had a fancy for her since she was five and used to fight like a tiger-cat if I wanted to kiss her—'I don't love you! you're ugly! Go away! Don't come near me. You horrid, ugly, cruel boy!'" He imitated the shrill agonised voice of a child, and laughed. "But that day decided me." He was holding the candle a little crooked.

Rebekah had heard that story often before; it was one of those he often told in expansive moods. She had even heard him tell it to the men in the billiard room, when they were praising her milk punch.

"She looks pale," said Rebekah, rising. "I hope she wasn't ill."

"Ill—you should have seen her dancing! A freak, I suppose, to come home like this in the wet. You can't account for a woman, my dear. I've found that out long ago. Haven't I been married seven years!" He would have touched her under the chin again but she had turned to the wardrobe to get a shawl to put across Bertie's feet. "Is supper ready? They had good wine there, but really nothing fit to eat."

"Yes, I got it ready before you left. You'll find the matches and lamp on the sideboard as you go in."

He put the candle down on the dressing-table and went out whistling one of the tunes they had danced to.

When he was gone Rebekah bent down to cover Bertie's feet. She stroked them softly with her hand. They were pink and dimpled as a baby's, such tiny feet for such a big woman. Then she covered them up carefully with the shawl, turning up the damp edge of the dress that it might not touch them. She put a candle and matches on a chair at the bedside, that Bertie might find them when she woke, and then she took up the light and went to the dining-room.

Her husband had taken off his greatcoat, and sat at the head of the table, in his white shirt-front and beamingly contented face above it.

"Won't you sit down and take some too? This bobotie<sup>1</sup> is excellent.—No, you won't? You've been off your feed the last day or two.—Oh!"—he looked up and laughed—"I'd quite forgotten what you told me this morning! I'm to be the patriarch Jacob, eh?—'Now Jacob had twelve sons and twelve daughters'—or was it Job?" He laughed again. "Take a little soda water? That's more in your line at such times, I think.—Who'd be a woman!—You're always a bit off colour the first month or two."

Rebekah sat down at the side of the table before the glass of soda he had poured out for her.

[<sup>1</sup> Bobotie : Curried hash.]

"This cold bobotie is really excellent." He helped himself again. "Had some at Brownlee's the other night, such stuff! This just wants the very *smallest* touch of cayenne though! Is there any on the side-board?" She rose to fetch it for him. "Just bring me the brandy too while you are up—no—on second thoughts I won't; I've had enough. I'll have milk with my soda. Did the boy clean my fishing boots?"

"Yes, but he hadn't time to polish the billiard-room floor. He'll do that to-morrow before you come back." She sat down again at the side of the table and leaned her elbows on it. "I don't know what's the matter with the girl. She leaves all her work for him and me. And she was so good when she first came. I liked her better than I ever liked any servant before. She is so strange now; she knocks against me in the passage though there's plenty of room to pass. She is so rude to me, as if she hated me. I can't understand it. If I——"

He interrupted her quickly; "I'll change my mind and have a little brandy if you'll bring it me; just a tiny drop. Pour it out for me, one dessertspoonful—so! Pure soda isn't good to go to sleep on, except for a little woman in a certain blissful condition." He laughed more boisterously than there seemed need. "Isn't that the baby crying?" he said.

She listened; "I can't hear it!" But she rose and took the candle and went to see if it were all right.

He finished his supper in silence; then he rose and paced the room twice; then he stopped at the window that looked out into the back yard, and drew the blind a little aside, and looked out; but there was nothing to be seen except the dark. Then he turned down the lamp and went to his dressing-room.

Now, what really happened to Baby-Bertie was this: When she and Frank got to the house where the party was to be held they found it brilliantly lighted up, the garden and veranda full of Japanese lanterns, and light



streaming from doors and windows, through which came the sound of music, for dancing had already begun.

A little sitting-room on the right of the entrance had been turned into a dressing-room, with a large mirror and dressing-table, and Bertie went in to take off her wrappers. Behind the dressing-room was a small bedroom, where the maid put away slippers and cloaks of the guests as she took them. Bertie could hardly wait to take hers off when she heard the music, and as there was someone using the glass she did not even look at herself before she hurried across the hall to the dancing-room. Most of the dancers were youths and girls under twenty-one with a few of older growth. Near the window to the right as she went in stood the daughter of the house whose birthday it was, with two other young girls and a young man. As Bertie walked up to them the two young girls turned away, but the daughter of the house accepted her congratulations, and the young man spoke to Bertie. Then two men, who had seen her coming in, came towards her from opposite sides of the room; the one who reached her first asked her to dance with him, and soon she forgot everything but the light and the music and the delicious whirl as she danced. As soon as one dance was over someone asked her for the next. Sometimes one of her partners suggested that they should go and sit on one of the closed-in verandas and talk and rest, but she always said she would rather dance. She had one dance with Frank, about eleven o'clock. He liked to dance with her, partly because he liked her and partly because he knew they looked well dancing together and men envied him his pretty sister-in-law.

After that, he had gone to the back veranda to have a smoke and to chat and romp with the younger girls from twelve to sixteen, who had gone there to play round games because there was no room for them in the dancing-room.

And Bertie danced on.

Once in a dance, as Bertie passed a girl she knew, she

smiled and nodded to her; but the girl seemed to be looking the other way and did not notice her. The rain poured, and left off, and poured again; but she heard nothing of it as she danced.

By and by, as the band was playing a very fast waltz and she was whirling round and round with it, someone trod on her dress. The white gauze which covered the silk skirt tore from the waist to the bottom and the long gossamer flounce made a streamer behind her. She caught it with one hand and holding it together laughed and nodded to her partner, and ran away to the dressing-room.

There was no one there now. She stood before the mirror to examine the torn skirt; then she began taking pins from the plate on the dressing-table to pin it with. She began at the waist and pinned downwards.

The throb of the dance was still in her feet.

The rain had left off, only the sound of the great drops falling from the eaves and the branches of the trees outside interfered with the sound of the music which came loud through the two closed doors :

‘Oh the torture and the anguish  
That cannot follow thee,’

the band was playing. She hurried to get back. She had to bend down very low at one side to pin on the flounce, so that her head was half-way to the floor; then, amid the music, she heard the sound of voices talking in the little bedroom at the back where the cloaks were stored. She paid no attention to them but hurried on, her face pink with bending so low in a side-ward position. Suddenly a name struck her—it was Rebekah’s. Two old ladies who had brought three young daughters had gone to the little back room to be out of the way of the noise and dancing and were talking together. The noise of the drops falling from the eaves and the music and dancing prevented her hearing all that was said, but she heard part. “It seems strange she should have been asked,” one said. “Yes, but—

the invitation three weeks ago——"; and then the music broke in with a particularly loud burst—"to bring her here among our innocent young girls!"

Bertie kept on pinning; she heard "she" and "she says" and "to her." Then she heard Rebekah's name again; and then—"but perhaps her sister did not know."

Bertie was motionless with a pin in one hand, her figure still half bent down over her dress, but her head raised to listen.

She heard Mrs. Drummond's name, and then—"it was her schoolmaster."

Quickly and noiselessly she raised herself; she dropped the pin softly on to the floor; she looked round the room with her deadly white face.

If she went out by the door that led into the hall, someone would be nearly sure to meet her. Again she looked round the room. There was a large French window at the side of the room which opened in the gable into the flower garden and shrubbery. It was low, and was hooked open two inches to let in the air. Softly she unhooked it and turned it back. It made no sound; she stepped out through it. Below was a bed of rose bushes; as she stepped into the bed of rich soft mould her feet sank almost ankle deep into it. She turned and closed the window softly, and with difficulty drew her feet out of the wet earth. She stepped into the gravel path. All the Chinese lanterns had long gone out with the rain, and the shrubbery was quite dark; she walked through the bushes, keeping away from the house and near the wall till she came to the gate. She opened it noiselessly and shut it again. She was now in the great avenue. She caught her skirt and threw it over her left arm, and began to walk quickly. The drops from the trees as the wind shook the branches fell on her naked arms and shoulders and ran down her back. She began to run; the skirt slipped from her arm and the train bellying out behind her whipped through the puddles of mud and water,

drawing up the sticks and dead leaves. Faster and faster she ran. She turned into the next avenue. At last she was at Rebekah's gate. She opened it softly and crept up the little gravelled path to the steps. She could see there was still a light in Rebekah's study; it was shining through the window on the plumbago hedge at the end of the house. She stole up the steps and across the veranda and turned the handle of the front door without a sound; but, as she turned to shut it from the inside, it slipped from her wet fingers and closed with a loud noise. She stood still listening to hear if Rebekah was coming, but there was no sound, and she turned down the side passage and went into her own room and closed the door behind her.

She knew there was a candle and matches on the dressing-table, but she did not light it. The large four-poster bed stood across the end of the little room with the window opening over it at the side; at the foot of the bed there was just room for a person to get in between the bed and the wall. She crept in and knelt up, pressing her face against the wall-paper. The old, old, terrible feeling had come back, the feeling she had lost for so many years; it was here again. Something following her, following her, following her! She pressed her face closer against the wall and folded her arms over her head. She felt as if everything in her were pressing down, down, down. It was so nice to press in there between the wall and the bed, it seemed to hold one up. If only one did not feel so cold. The cold seemed to break out from her heart over her whole body. She did not think of anything in particular; she only felt so cold.

After a time she began feeling faint kneeling up there; she crept into the bed. She threw herself down on her back in the middle of the bed. After a time the faintness seemed to get better and she fell into a heavy sleep. It was so that Rebekah and Frank found her when they came into the room.

After Rebekah had covered her and left her, she slept

on for a long while, a heavy, motionless sleep. Then, suddenly, she began to move restlessly and to moan. She was having a dream. She thought she was in a great round theatre like a circus; it was filled from floor to ceiling with seats which rose tier above tier over each other, and all were crowded with people. She was sitting half-way down on one side. In the circle in the centre of the theatre there was white sand scattered, and women in white dresses were dancing there, and all the crowd were looking down at them, and she looked down too. Then suddenly she noticed that the people were not looking at the women any more, they were all looking round the theatre as though they were seeking for someone; and she looked about too, to see what it was they were looking for. Then she noticed a man on the other side of the theatre just opposite her, with a great red fat face, who rose from his seat. She felt a kind of horror when she looked at him. He rose from his seat, and pointed with his great red fat finger, and cried, "That is she!" And all the people from the floor to the ceiling rose to their feet; and still the man pointed with his forefinger and cried, "That is she!" Then she looked round also to see who it was they were looking at—and then, suddenly, she knew it was herself they were looking at! Tier above tier, all round that vast place, the faces looked at her, and the man pointed with his red forefinger, and cried, "That is she!" A cold sweat broke out on her (in truth it broke out on her as she lay on the bed); she tried to slip down between her seat and the one before it and hide, but she could not move. She seized the back of the seat before her with both hands and tried to force herself down, but she could not stir; she was as if fastened to the seat. And from floor to ceiling the faces looked down at her; she saw her father and her mother there and the old farm servants: old Ayah and a little yellow shawl over her shoulders, and Griet looking from under her arm; there were all the men she had danced with: high up near the roof she saw John-Ferdinand looking down at

her and Veronica standing just behind him, and low down she saw Mrs. Drummond with a lace handkerchief at her lips, looking at her. Everyone she had ever known was there. Then suddenly it seemed as if the white dress of one of the dancers in the circle below got torn; a long white trail hung down from it, and as the dancer swept round and round it grew longer and longer. It skirled as she whirled, it bellied out and out at the back and grew fuller and fuller; it frilled into soft billowy waves and passed over the heads of the dancers, filling all the circle below with a sea of misty white; it rose higher and higher, unrolling and unrolling; it came to the place where she sat; it passed her and rose to the ceiling and they were all suffocating. With a wild cry Bertie sprang up, struggling; before she knew where she was she was standing on the floor with the cold perspiration streaming down her, and the four-poster iron bedstead still rattling. At first she tried to remember how she came to be standing there in her clothes on the floor in the dark, and could not: then slowly she remembered everything.

Without lighting the candle she undressed, dropping her clothes on the floor where she stood. She felt for her nightdress and crept into bed; she drew the cover up high over her head. Yes, the old, old feeling she used to have at the farm had come back to her; something following her, following her, following her, and everything in her sinking down, down, down! She drew one of the pillows from under her head and laid it against her, and folded both her arms round it and pressed it to her as if it had been a person. It comforted her a little to hold it so close; it seemed to prevent that sinking feeling. She tucked the cover in tighter over her head. If she could only keep everything out.

When she woke the next morning it was already late; she could see by the lines of light through the venetian blind at her bedside that the sun was shining, though the room was still darkened with the drawn blind.

Rebekah had evidently been in early, for a tray with biscuits and coffee, which was now cold, could dimly be seen on the chair at the bedside. Bertie lay still. It pained her to see the light coming in under the bars of the blind. If it could only always be night and one would never need to see anyone.

Then she heard the sound of steps coming up the gravelled path; she half sat up and raised slightly the corner of the blind; but it was only the butcher's boy coming for orders, whistling. She let it drop again. She could not bear people to come up the path.

After a time she got up and sat down in her night-gown on the floor at the side of the bed and began in the semi-darkness to put on the stockings Rebekah had put ready for her beside her boots. Slowly she drew one on; then, before she had gartered it, she drew up her knees and folded her arms about them and leaned her forehead on her arms. She sat motionless so she might have gone to sleep again.

Then suddenly she sat up and began to pull on the other.

"I will go to Aunt Mary-Anna," she said. "I will go to my Aunt Mary-Anna!" She began putting on her boots and lacing them up in the darkness. Her lips were puffed and her face a little swollen. There was a dull, obstinate resolution in it; the only form of strength her face ever wore.

This Aunt Mary-Anna was a sister of her mother's and of Frank and John-Ferdinand's father. Many years before she had come out to visit her sister, and at the old farm had met a young man from the next town whom she had married. Later they had moved to a small town further up-country, where her husband was a general agent, and where two daughters had been born to her, who were several years younger than Bertie. They had been sent to England now for some years to finish their education, and she had written many times to ask Bertie, who was her godchild, to come up and stay with her while they were away. But

Bertie had never wished to leave the old farm till she had left so suddenly with Rebekah. Now it came to her suddenly that she might go to her aunt's; it was so far away from everywhere. She pictured to herself the long miles of rolling karroo, the rocks and koppies and sand and whole mountain range that lay between it and anywhere. She would go first by train and then by postcard—on, and on, and on; she would have to go for days to get there.

"I must go! I will go!" she muttered, as she laced her boots in the half-dark, with her lips heavy set.

When she told Rebekah of her plan, Rebekah was not surprised. The little mother was always writing to ask when she was coming home, and it would seem a step on her way if she went to her aunt's, which was somewhat nearer the old farm than Cape Town. So Rebekah helped her to pack her things. She could not leave the next day as she wished, because she had to catch the postcard which only travelled once a week; but three days after she left.

As she was so busy packing, Rebekah did not wonder she went to say good-bye to no one. There would not be room in the postcard for all her things; so Rebekah hung her evening dress and smart gowns in the wardrobe in Bertie's room, where she would find them when she came next year to visit her again. But Bertie knew she never would.



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